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FEB

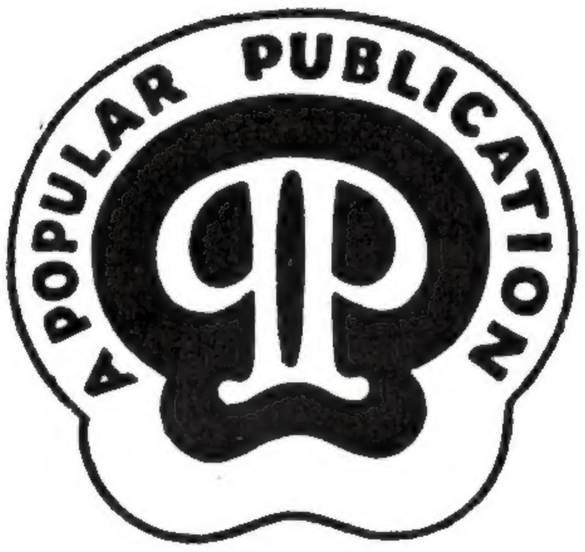
Adventure

PEACE MARSHAL
by FRANK GRUBER

THREE MAD SERGEANTS
by GEORGES SURDEZ

H. BEDFORD-JONES

ROBERT E. PINKERTON



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Adventure

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Vol. 100, No. 4 for February, 1939 Published Once a Month

Peace Marshal (1st part of 4) . . . . . FRANK GRUBER 7
John Bonniwell wanted peace but lived in war—the Texans gave him no time to put his guns away.

Three Mad Sergeants (a novelette) . . . . . GEORGES SURDEZ 31
"Crackpot Palace" they called the Khaloua blockhouse, home of *cafard,* and there the Legion sent thirty-nine hard nuts to "crack".

You Take Michaelangelo (an off-the-trail story) . . . . PAUL O'NEIL 61
The story of a war photographer in China who liked bombs because they made pictures.

Blue Desert . . . . . BOB EMAHISER 71
They were flying the Pacific, and somebody's navigation was haywire, and the "blue desert" below them smiled and waited until the gas ran out.

Hung Drive . . . . . ROBERT E. PINKERTON 82
Too many queer things were happening, and the only one that could be seen was that three miles of river were piling their logs into a tight-locked jam.

The Wet-Eared Pup . . . . . WARREN F. ROBINSON 90
"You want to go whaling, eh?" old Hartvigsen growled. "I'll give you whales, and sea and ice—and hell!" A story of the modern whale ships.

One Stayed, One Went . . . . . H. BEDFORD-JONES 99
The first iron ship? It goes back to a fight and a murder-plan on a moonlit tropic beach.

Flirting With Death (a fact story) . . . . . JACK TOOKER 109
A noted mountain lion hunter skirts the Happy Hunting Ground on the Grand Canyon rim.

The Camp-Fire . . . . Where readers, writers and adventurers meet 115

Ask Adventure . . . . . Information you can't get elsewhere 119

The Trail Ahead . . . . . News of next month's issue 128

Lost Trails . . . . . Where old paths cross 4

Cover by Graves Gladney
Headings by I. B. Hazelton and George H. Wert
Howard V. L. Bloomfield, Editor

Published once a month by Popular Publications, Inc., 2256 Grove Street, Chicago, Illinois. Editorial and executive offices, 205 East Forty-second Street, New York City. Harry Steeger, President and Secretary. Harold S. Goldsmith, Vice President and Treasurer. Entered as Second Class Matter, October 2, 1935, at the Post Office at Chicago, Illinois, under the Act of March 3, 1879. Yearly subscription $1.50 in advance. Single copy, 15 cents. Foreign postage, $1.00 additional. Trade Mark registered.

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by S. J. E.
(NAME AND ADDRESS SENT UPON REQUEST)

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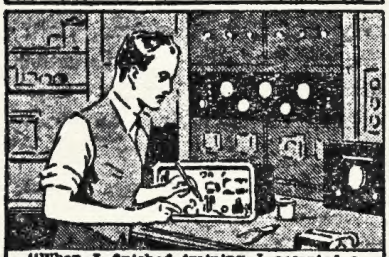

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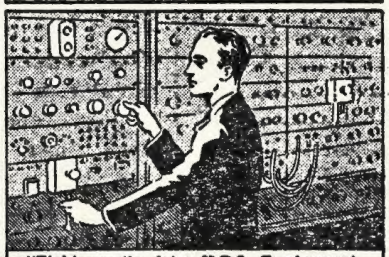

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The following were all yeomen in Flag Office of Vice Admiral of the Pacific Fleet from 1919-1922:—Emery Dobson, "Spick" LaChance, Carl Dudding, Tom Girty, Roger Sherman, John Frew, Frank Bertin. Word wanted by former shipmate, Horald P. Gilmour, 22 Worcester Street, Boston, Mass.

Floyd Maby, last heard from in Seattle, Wash., about 1933. Home originally at Plymouth, Pennsylvania. Word appreciated by his mother, Mrs. Ida Maby, 191 N. Division St., Buffalo, N. Y.

Herbert Roig, 37, originally from Texas, last heard of in 1928 living at Marquette Apts., 965 Geary St., San Francisco, Calif. Was working for the San Francisco *Examiner* circulation department in 1928. Please write Stanley Jones, 1146 Webster St., San Francisco, Calif.

Dudleigh R. Wickham, 61 Holmes Court, Albany, New York wants word of "Clifford Ogden" or "Clifford Cochrane", formerly of Oakland, Calif., undertaker, who served with him in the 63rd Infantry, also helped build the railroad from Seward to Fairbanks, Alaska. Also Bob Baker of San Francisco who left Seward with him on the *Alameda*, who still has the Indian pestle Wickham found when they were shipwrecked near Vancover, B. C. Understands Baker shipped to China.

Louis P. Stilwell, 100 Buckingham Rd., Brighton 1, Sussex, England, would welcome any news of his buddy, Louis Hudson, heard of in Lewes, England, in 1918 and later in New York.

Wanted: Address of Frank S. Jones. Was in Laona, Calif., then Los Angeles, when last heard from. Communicate with E. C. Wilcox, Yellowstone Park, Wyo.

Word wanted of Russell Stanley, formerly of 838 Jannette Street, Parkersburg, West Virginia. Was in Co. F, 20th Infantry, from January, 1930 to January, 1933. Communicate with Sgt. David H. Wagner, Hq. Company, 27th Infantry, Schofield Barracks, T. H.

Word wanted of Burton Funnell, who lived in Norwich, N. Y. and is racetrack enthusiast. Please communicate with Philip Schleit, 164 Durston Ave., Syracuse, New York.

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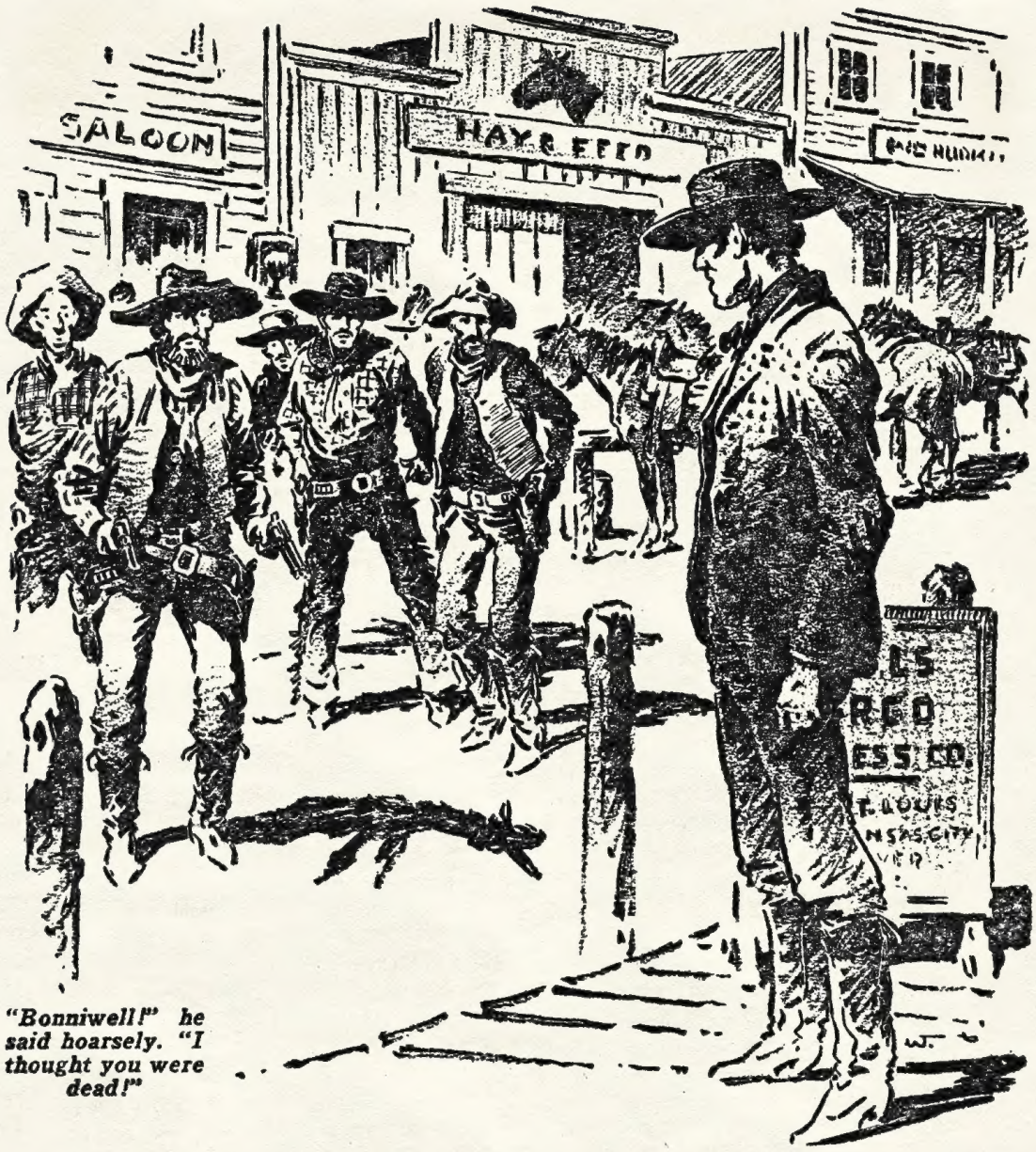


"Bonniwell!" he said hoarsely. "I thought you were dead!"

PEACE MARSHAL

FIRST PART OF FOUR

By FRANK GRUBER

THE hansom cab turned down the tree-shaded street opposite Gramercy Park and the silk-hatted driver scanned the numbers of the houses as his sleek horse trotted along. Finally he saw the number he was seeking and pulled up the horse. It stopped before the most imposing brownstone house in the block.

The cabby climbed down from his perch and said to the solitary passenger, "Here it is, Mister."

A lean man in a Prince Albert climbed out. He drew a half dollar from the pocket of his silk waistcoat. Then he looked at the brownstone house and a pleased look crossed his face. He put the half dollar back in his pocket and fished out a silver dollar instead. He handed it to the cabby and said, mag-

nanimously, "Keep the change, driver."

He turned back to the brownstone house and smacked his lips.

"I'm glad I played my hunch," he said to himself. "Ferd seems to have done very well for himself."

He crossed the sidewalk, climbed three stairs and lifted a brass door knocker. He banged it against the metal plate.

Presently a liveried butler opened the door. The smile of the lean man widened. "Tell Mr. Ferdinand Barat that his brother is calling."

The butler bowed. "Very good, sir. Will you come in, sir?"

Jeff Barat followed the butler into a large room. The butler disappeared through a doorway and Jeff Barat appraised the rich furnishings of the room. "Not *bad,*" he said aloud. He tugged gently at his coat lapels and pulled out his starched cuffs.

He heard a heavy step and turned to face his brother.

"Ferd!"

The man who came into the room was about forty-five, seven or eight years older than Jeff Barat. He was a rather heavy man and wore a tailored Prince Albert, dark striped trousers and a flowered waistcoat.

"Jeff!" he said. "After all these years!"

They shook hands warmly, then stepped back to survey one another. Jeff Barat grinned slyly. "You've gotten fat, Ferd. You look like a rich man."

The older brother seemed to wince a little. "You don't look a year older yourself. What is it now—nine years since you. . . ."

Jeff Barat chuckled. "Since I skipped Mr. Lincoln's draft? Yes, it's just about nine years. It *was* in '63, wasn't it?"

"Yes. It caused me considerable embarrassment at the time. You know I would have given you the three hundred to pay the substitute."

"It wasn't the money—it was the principle of the thing. And that whippersnapper of a lieutenant—I never took that from any man."

"I gave his family some money," said Ferd Barat, hastily. He took a deep breath. "Where've you been during these years, Jeff? You never wrote a line, you know."

"I was in California for a year or two; then I took a trip to Idaho." A reminiscent grin played about Jeff Barat's mouth. "I was at the Alder Gulch diggings for awhile. Struck it rich—"

"Why, that's fine, Jeff!" exclaimed his brother.

Jeff chuckled. "I sold out for twenty-two thousand and ran it up to fifty thousand at faro. And then—I lost it all in a single night."

Ferdinand Barat's face fell. "All?"

"Every dollar. In Cheyenne, Wyoming, when they were building the railroad, I borrowed ten dollars and a pack of cards and ran it up to one hundred and ten thousand." Jeff rubbed his chin with the back of his hand. "I lost it all in Utah!"

FERDINAND BARAT drew a thin cigar from his pocket and bit off the end. He did not offer one to his brother. "And today—how are you fixed today?"

Jeff looked around the room and picked out the best chair. He sat down in it, stretched out his long legs and grinned at his brother. "Today, Ferd, I'm flat broke. And if you think I'm going to make a touch, you're quite right."

For a moment the older man scowled. Then he sighed heavily. "After all, you *are* my brother."

Jeff sighed, too. He'd wondered if he'd lost the touch during the years. Evidently he hadn't. He said: "Ferd, I read a piece about you in a St. Louis paper. You've been in railroads with Mr. Vanderbilt and Mr. Fisk and some of the boys."

"A month ago," said Ferdinand Barat, "I was worth ten million dollars. I had them licked—and then they ganged up on me."

Jeff studied his brother's face. "But they didn't get all of it?"

"Just about. I may have a quarter million or so, but that's all."

Jeff Barat got up quickly from his chair.

"A quarter million!" he cried. "That's plenty. I've got a proposition in Kansas that'll make your Wall Street stuff look like small potatoes—"

"I wouldn't give you a quarter million dollars for all of Kansas!" exclaimed Ferdinand Barat.

"Ah, but that's where you're wrong, Ferd. All you Easterners are wrong about Kansas. You think of it as a heap of sand with a herd of buffalo and a few coyotes. And you're wrong, Ferd, dead wrong. They're building railroads in Kansas. You know railroads, Ferd."

"As far as I'm concerned," retorted the older brother, "there are no more railroads."

Jeff Barat brushed the remark aside. "Hear me through, Ferd. Down in Texas there are millions and millions of cattle. They let them run wild during the war and the country's over-run with them. They're worthless—in Texas. Some of the ranchers kill them for the hide and tallow, for which they get from two to three dollars. And here in the East, you're crying for beef. A Texas steer is worth thirty-five to forty dollars in New York. It'll bring thirty in Chicago, twenty to twenty-five in Kansas, at railhead."

"True, perhaps," conceded Ferdinand. "But how are you going to get your steer from Texas to Kansas?"

"Like they've been doing it since 1867—overland, up the Chisholm Trail. They drove thirty-five thousand head up that trail in 1867. Last year two million Texas steers reached Kansas."

"Two million?" exclaimed Ferdinand, incredulous.

"Two million. And buyers in Kansas fought to get them."

Ferdinand's eyes became thoughtful. "I can check that, Jeff. Go ahead. What is his million dollar proposition you mentioned a minute ago? How do *we* come in on that?"

Jeff's nostrils flared in triumph. He brought two folded maps from his pocket.

"This is a map of the United States—west of the Mississippi. You know all about railroad stocks, Ferd. But do you know anything about the railroads themselves? This line here is the Union Pacific Railroad, which was joined with the Central Pacific in Utah, less than three years ago. Here, notice where it runs through Nebraska, Wyoming? Its closest point to Texas is in northern Colorado. Now—" Jeff put the first map aside and unfolded the other.

"This is a large scale map of Kansas, the Indian Nations and Texas. Up here is the Kansas Pacific Railroad. Here is Abilene, which from 1867 to 1871 received nine-tenths of all the Texas cattle. It was, last year, the busiest, ripsnortingest little town in all Kansas. This year grass is growing on its streets. The cattle trade went to Caldwell, Newton and Hays City."

Jeff paused a moment and looked at his brother. "Study this map closely. Notice the position of the Kansas Pacific Railroad, the location of these towns that are today getting the cattle trade. Here is the Chisholm Trail, over which every head of cattle comes to Kansas. Suppose the railroad went right down here into the southwest corner of Kansas? Suppose a shipping point was located at this point?"

"Why, I imagine it would get most of the cattle trade. It's a hundred miles closer to the origin of the cattle herds."

"Right!" cried Jeff Barat. "And that's where we come in. A railroad *is* going to this spot. A town *is* going to be laid out there—and no one knows it yet but you and I."

"Do *we* build it?"

"No, it's already being built. In two months it will reach this spot on the Chisholm Trail, where there's now a store and a half dozen mud covered shacks. They call it Broken Lance. The minute the railroad comes to it, Broken Lance will become a city, bigger than Abilene. It'll be the greatest boom town the West ever saw. A million head of cattle will come to it even this first year. And you and I will collect a toll of two, three, or four dollars on every steer that reaches Broken Lance. Why? Because we will own every acre of land in twenty miles. Because the drovers can't take their steers across our private property without paying us."

"GO on," said Ferdinand. "We do that for a year, perhaps two. Then the railroad will be built down into Texas. What happens to us then?"

"We're still in Kansas. We're the biggest ranchers in the country. Why? Because we took our toll from the drovers in cattle, instead of money. We own a hundred thousand cattle, which cost us nothing. We're nine hundred miles closer to the market and we can undersell any Texas rancher."

Ferdinand Barat shook his head.

"Perhaps we can acquire the land around this railroad point. The rest of your scheme though, is predicated upon your being able to exact a toll from the Texas drovers. Ah—suppose they refuse to pay? I've heard they're very harsh men down in that country. Every man, they tell me, carries a gun."

"Ferd—"

"Yes?"

Jeff Barat looked thoughtfully at his brother. Then suddenly he shook his right arm. Ferd Barat blinked. A double-barreled derringer had appeared miraculously in his brother's hand.

"Ferd," said Jeff, slowly, "will I shock you when I say I've been making my living as a gambler these last dozen years?"

"A lot of men gamble," said Ferd Barat. "I like a good game myself."

Jeff nodded. "It so happens I have a peculiar ability aside from gambling. I am a rather famous personage out West. I'm known as one of the fastest gun throwers in four states."

Ferd Barat's eyes widened. "You—you've killed someone?"

Jeff Barat did not blink an eyelash. "More than a dozen men have drawn against me, Ferd. I'm alive. In the matter I outlined to you, my reputation will be an invaluable asset. What's more, I know a couple of men—friends of mine—who'll string along with me. What we can't get by money we'll take by force."

Ferd Barat looked for a long moment at his lean brother. Then he sighed. "I wish, Jeff, you'd been here last month. You might have been some assistance to me."

"It's a deal, then?"

"I don't know. Perhaps. Naturally, I want to go into it some more. I want to verify some of the things you've told me. In the meantime, stay here with me."

Jeff Barat smacked his lips. "In that case, I'll go down to the Astor House and get my things. I wasn't just sure how you'd react to the return of the prodigal, and so I checked in there. I don't mind spending a couple of weeks in the old town. It'll be fun!"

Jeff's ideas of fun did not coincide with those of his older brother, but Ferdinand did not comment on the matter until the third day, when Jeff, ready for the evening's entertainment, said:

"I say, Ferd, how about some change?"

"Change?" asked Ferdinand. "I gave you five hundred the day before yesterday."

"Yes, of course," chuckled Jeff. "But that was the day before yesterday."

The older man rubbed his chin. After a moment, he said, "All right. If you do everything on such a scale I guess we'll *have* to make money on that cattle deal."

"You're all set, then?"

Ferdinand nodded. "Just about. I verified the railroad survey today. Tonight I'm seeing a man who's been out in that country. You see, I want to get a picture of things out there from a disinterested person. By the way, why don't you come with me? I think you'd be interested in this man."

"What's his name?"

"Judson. He's a writer."

"I never heard of him. I did have an engagement with a young lady I met last night, but if the deal's about set, I might as well drop her now as in a few days."

FERDINAND took his brother to a club on Fifth Avenue. Jeff had never seen so many white waistcoats at one time in his life.

Ferdinand's friend was waiting for them.

"My brother Jeff," Ferdinand said to the writer. "He's just returned from an extensive residence in the West."

Judson held out his hand.

"Jeff Barat," he said musingly. "That name has a familiar ring to it. And your face—I'm almost sure I've seen it somewhere."

"Perhaps you have," said Jeff Barat. "But I don't remember meeting anyone by the name of Judson before."

"Oh, but that isn't the name by which they know me out West. Out there I use the name of Buntline—Ned Buntline!"

Jeff Barat's lips seemed to tighten. "Ned Buntline! You're the man that writes that stuff about Buffalo Bill. The bang-bang kid stuff."

Buntline smiled, but there wasn't much warmth in it.

"Perhaps my books do appeal to many boys," he said, "but my publishers tell me quite a few grownups read them, too."

"That's true," said Ferdinand Barat. "I don't happen to have read one myself, but I've been told Mr. Buntline's books have an enormous circulation. And you have a wide acquaintance among Western men, haven't you, Mr. Buntline?"

"Yes, I have. I know Mr. Cody intimately. And Masterson and Hickok and quite a few others. I've traveled extensively through the West, gathering material for my books. Most of my characters are patterned after real personages, you know. The incidents are based on things that actually took place."

"Like Wild Bill Hickok killing eleven of the McKanlas gang at one time?" Jeff Barat asked sarcastically.

"Mr. Hickok hasn't affirmed that," said Buntline. "Nor has he denied it. The thing may sound fantastic perhaps to people who don't really know the West. Mr. Hickok's exploit is eleven years old. But I know of one that almost equaled it which happened only a few months ago. And I'm in a position to speak of it with authenticity. I didn't see the fight, but I was in Haleyville when it happened. I saw the bodies within ten minutes after the fight. There were *four*. All were killed by one man, the marshal of Haleyville."

"You mean John Bonniwell?"

"Yes. The four men he killed were notorious gunfighters. They'd sought him out to kill him. Instead they were killed themselves."

"And so was Bonniwell."

"No, I understand he was badly wounded, but he was taken to a hospital in Kansas City."

"Just talk. The sheriff buried him. He was in a tight spot and he spread the rumor that Bonniwell was only wounded, figuring it'd keep the Texas men quiet for a spell. Bonniwell did have the Indian sign on them."

"You're familiar with Kansas matters, Mr. Barat," said Ned Buntline thoughtfully. "I wonder—no, I don't think so. Knowing your brother—"

"What? If I'm Jeff Barat, the gambler?" Jeff Barat grinned thinly.

"Are you?"

"Yes."

The expression on Ned Buntline's face was comical to see. Jeff Barat laughed out loud. "You didn't expect to ever meet Jeff Barat in a club on Fifth Avenue in New York, did you, Mr. Buntline?"

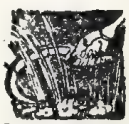
"Hardly," said the writer.

Ferd Barat tried to smooth over the difficult situation, but Ned Buntline made an excuse and withdrew after a moment or two.

The older Barat shook his head. "All right, Jeff. We're starting tomorrow. Judson's reaction toward you is enough for me. I wanted to be sure about you. You've enough of me in you, Jeff, to succeed. We'll go out there. In two or three years I'll come back here and teach Vanderbilt and the others a few new tricks. At the moment they've got too much money for me. But they'll hear from me again."

CHAPTER II

LAW OF THE COLT



JOHN BONNIWELL was walking. Of course the male nurse lent a steadying hand. But it was good to use his legs. There had been a time when he hadn't been sure if he'd ever use them again.

They made two slow, complete circuits of the broad veranda. It was spring and the sun was warm, life-giving. Bonniwell inhaled great drafts of sweet Missouri air.

"There you are, Mr. Wells," said the nurse as he brought Bonniwell back to his wheel chair. "Sit here now and soak up some of that good sun for an hour or so. It'll make a new man of you."

Bonniwell would have thanked the man, but he was annoyed. During his walk someone had brought out another invalid and seated her in a chair only five or six feet from Bonniwell's own.

He didn't look directly at her. Not right away. He'd caught a quick glance of her as the nurse seated him, but when the man left he looked steadily out over the cheap, unpainted board houses and muddy street that was St. Louis in 1872.

He thought: "She's watching me now. In a little while she's going to talk, tell me how glorious the sun is."

She said: "Isn't spring wonderful?"

He waited a cold moment, then turned brooding eyes on her. He couldn't see much of her because she was wrapped to the chin in a heavy, woolly robe. He could see her face. It was a bit thin and the smooth skin was whiter than Bonniwell liked to see in anyone. Her eyes were enormous, her hair golden blond. The sun shining on it made it look like fine silk.

She was young. She looked to be not more than eighteen or nineteen, but was probably two or three years older than that. By city standards she was beautiful. Farther West folks would have thought her too frail and delicate.

"Spring's always good," he admitted grudgingly.

"You've been here a long time?"

"Yes."

She smiled brightly. "You're from the West, aren't you?"

He nodded.

She knew that the conversation was one-sided, yet she persisted. "That's why I spoke to you. You see, I'm being discharged next week. Then I'm going West to—to pick up some weight. My uncle has a ranch in Kansas. I'm going to visit him. He lives near Broken Lance. Do you know where that is?"

He looked at her through narrowed lids. "Broken Lance? Your folks sending you there?"

"Yes. Uncle didn't seem to want me to come. He said it was a bit wild out there, but Dad—well, he hasn't enough money to send me anywhere else. And the doctors say I must live outdoors a while. In a drier climate. So it's Broken Lance, Kansas."

Her uncle had been right. Broken Lance *was* wild. It was in the heart of the Indian and Buffalo country. It wasn't a woman's country, unless the woman could drive a span of oxen and shoot a rifle with accuracy.

This girl wasn't the sort. She wouldn't thrive in Broken Lance, despite the dry, healthy climate that was supposed to be good for sick lungs.

"You didn't answer," the girl's voice cut into Bonniwell's thoughts. "Do you know where Broken Lance is?"

He bit his lip and nodded. "I've been through it."

"You have?" she exclaimed eagerly. "Then tell me about it. Is it like Uncle Ollie said?"

"Did he say Broken Lance wasn't a town? That there're only a few houses there?"

"Oh yes, he tried to discourage me from coming." She smiled. "I'm being forced on him. But tell me—have you ever met my uncle? Or heard of him?"

"I don't know. I don't know his name."

"Oh, how stupid of me! My name's Eleanor Simmons. My uncle's Oliver Simmons."

He whistled softly. She was Ollie Simmons' niece. He wouldn't have guessed it in a thousand guesses. He acknowledged her introduction. "My name's—John Wells." That was the name he had been using at the hospital.

"How do you do, Mr. Wells," she said. "I—you seemed to know my uncle. What sort of a man is he?"

"Don't you know?"

"I've never seen him. He went west before the war. Is he tall or short? Genial or a—a crosspatch?"

He grinned faintly. "Your uncle is one of the leading citizens out there. No one has ever said a word against him. Not in his hearing," he added under his breath. Ollie Simmons was a lobo wolf among coyotes.

Bonniwell ran a hand across his lean face; a face that was ordinarily sun-

tanned and weather-beaten, but now pallid from his long siege in the hospital.

Eleanor Simmons saw his apparent movement of weariness and was all sympathy. "I shouldn't question you like this. You're very ill, they told me."

"Did they tell you from what?" he asked quickly.

She shook her head. "No, they said you'd been hurt in an accident."

Five bullets in him. Yes, it had been an "accident." He said, "I'm not sick any more. Just a bit weak. I'll be leaving here in a couple of weeks."

"And you're going back west? To Broken Lance?"

"Oh, I didn't come from Broken Lance. Haleyville was my headquarters."

"Haleyville? I seem to recall the name. It's noted for something or other, isn't it?"

He waited just a moment before he said: "It's trail's end. On the railroad. That's probably why you've heard of it."

"Perhaps. What is it, nurse?"

A buxom woman had approached her chair. "Time for you to go in, Miss Simmons. It's getting a bit chilly."

"I hadn't noticed. Well, all right." She smiled brightly at Bonniwell as the nurse turned her chair and wheeled it into the hospital.

Bonniwell sighed after she had gone. If her uncle didn't think she ought to come to Broken Lance and her father didn't have the money, why didn't Ollie Simmons loan it to them and have the girl go to southern California? The climate was dry and warm there. Eleanor Simmons had no business in Broken Lance, Kansas.

HE made three complete circuits of the veranda the next day. He didn't lean once on the arm of the nurse. He wasn't even tired when he sat down in the chair by the railing. The weather was crisper today. Probably too cool.

No, it wasn't. She came out five minutes later.

"Hello, Mr. Wells," she greeted him cheerily. "I was hoping you'd be out here. I want to hear some more about Kansas. There's a woman in my ward from Kansas—Wichita. I asked her about Broken Lance. She'd never heard of it. But she knew about your home, Haleyville. What she said made me recall what I'd heard about it. It was that awful riot they had there last fall. It was in all the papers. It was the time the sheriff or marshal, or whatever they call him, killed all those—what were they, rustlers?"

They hadn't been exactly rustlers, Taylor and Smiley and the others. A decent rustler wouldn't have slept in the same bed with them. They had, however, been good pistol men. They'd put five bullets into Bonniwell before he had finally downed them.

He hadn't known, though, that the Eastern newspapers had printed anything about it. Out in Kansas they considered such stuff "local news."

He passed up her direct lead about Haleyville, shifted the conversation to the better things of Kansas. He told her of the rich country out there, the sandy loam the earlier settlers had passed up as too bare for good crops. Yet it was the finest wheatland in the country, when the soil was ploughed deep.

Some of the settlers had hundreds of acres in wheat now, and found it more profitable than cattle. In a few years the railroad would reach all the way down to Texas, and then the Chisholm Trail would be ploughed over, the trail towns forgotten. Haleyville and Broken Lance, and Dodge and Abilene would become sleepy country towns, safe even for girls like Eleanor Simmons.

She told him about herself. Her father was a doctor over in Benton. It was only a small village and the citizens were unusually healthy. It had strained her father's resources to send her here to the hospital in St. Louis.

She pulled John Bonniwell out of his natural reticence. He talked with her every day a half hour or more. He told her about the plains country, the far West. He had been to California twice, to Oregon and the Black Hills. He told her nothing about *himself*.

He'd hunted buffalo, hauled freight. She asked him questions. She ran down

every little detail of whatever the topic happened to be. When he wasn't with her he manufactured things to tell her, long stories that would prevent her from asking personal questions. He spent two days describing placer mining in California; one entire period he talked about a snow-storm in Montana. And four afternoons about the Union Pacific Railroad.

AND then it was the day she was to leave the hospital. A phaeton was out front to take her to the depot on Market Street. Bonniwell was on the veranda when she came out. She wore a dress that fitted tightly at her waist and billowed out into a wide skirt. And a bustle. She had on a green hat with a bit of fur trimming and a silk ribbon tied under her chin. There was a touch of color in her cheeks now.

Bonniwell looked at her and felt bleak inside. She was going away, out of his life.

She was sober.

"Will I meet you out there, John?" she asked. "Out there in Kansas?"

He wanted to tell her, yes, he'd see her in Kansas—in Broken Lance. He wanted to tell her that and he wanted to go to Broken Lance himself. But he couldn't do either. Because he was John Bonniwell and she didn't know it.

He said: "I don't know if I'll get to Kansas. I'm thinking of going to Texas."

"But you said the Chisholm Trail runs into Texas, and that goes straight through Broken Lance."

"Yes, it does," he admitted. "But I'm going to east Texas. My old captain wrote me not so long ago that there were chances for a man in east Texas."

"Your captain? You didn't tell me you were in the army." She realized suddenly that despite the daily talks she'd had with this lean, sober man during the past weeks, she really knew very little about him. He'd never even mentioned being in the war, and it is the commonest thing in the world for a man to say, "When I was in the army. . . ."

"Yes," he replied, "I was in the army. Three years."

"The North?"

He nodded. "Third Illinois Infantry. I—" He grinned faintly—"I even got to be a corporal."

Her forehead crinkled. "I'd have thought you too young for the war."

"I really was. When I enlisted in '62 I was sixteen."

She did a bit of quick mental arithmetic. "That makes you twenty-six now."

Only twenty-six? It seemed as though he had been around much longer than that. The three years of the war had seemed thirty. And the years since—why, he'd been out in the West a hundred years! It seemed that long.

A coachman came out with two carpetbags.

"Ready, Miss Simmons?" he said.

She held out her hand.

"Good-by," she said. "If you *should* come to Broken Lance—"

He smiled and said, "Good-by." And then she was walking down the short flight of stairs, climbing into the carriage. She looked back at him and waved and he said to himself, "This should have happened eight years ago."

The hospital days were long then. But at last the doctor tapped his chest, prodded here and there and said, "You're a well man, Mr. Wells. Which is something I never expected to say to you last fall, when I dug all that lead out of you."

He didn't really want to go to Texas. He was a Northerner, and down there in Texas they were still fighting the war. Bonniwell had met Texans in Kansas. They had put five bullets in him. A hundred Texas men with money in their pockets and liquor in their stomachs would consider the conflict between Bonniwell and the men of Texas a blood feud and be gunning for him.

But what could he do? After paying the hospital bills he had only three hundred dollars. St. Louis was not for him. He was an outdoor man.

In the far West, thousands of men were grubbing and washing for specks of yellow metal. On the plains the hunters were slaughtering the great buffalo herds.

Bonniwell had scraped and washed for gold; he had killed too many buffalo.

The zest for those things was gone. Captain Skinner had written him to come to Texas, but Bonniwell wasn't enthusiastic about that. There was one alternative. Somewhere out in Kansas or Colorado Tom Waggoner was building a railroad. Tom was the best friend he had in the world. He could no doubt find some sort of job for Bonniwell. It was a little too close to his old stamping grounds, but mixing with a different class of people he might lose his identity.

He stayed a day at the Planters Hotel in St. Louis. Then he packed his carpetbag and went to the railroad station. The next day he was in Kansas City.

Bonniwell walked past the police station and one or two men looked at his lean face and did not greet him. His illness had changed his appearance. His months in the hospital had made his skin several shades lighter.

He bought a railroad ticket to Baker, Kansas.

THE train was crowded. There were women on it. Women of the effete East, other women not so effete, in fancy satins and silks, with carmined lips and rouged cheeks.

There were men on the trains in silk hats and frock coats. Some of them were business men, some—usually those with the most expensive silk hats and the finest broadcloth coats with velvet collars—buffalo hunters, who had squandered a month's earnings on finery in which to disport for a few weeks; men who had sold their season's work and headed for St. Louis or farther east for brief vacations and were now returning to the plains, where they would pawn, gamble away or discard their fancy clothes and outfit themselves again with the buckskin of their callings.

Two or three poker games were going on. The conductor made some feeble protest about "gambling on trains" as the train pulled out of Kansas City, but he was ignored completely.

Bonniwell remained seated by the window the first two hours out of Kansas City. Then, the monotony of the scenery palling on him, he got up and walked back to the rear of the coach, to watch a poker game. He looked on for only a minute before he realized that this game was a bit more than ordinary. There were four men in the game, three of them wearing silk hats. The fourth man wore buckskin, but he had a huge stack of bills and gold coins before him. His clothing did not mean poverty.

The man who was dealing at the moment was about thirty-seven, perhaps a year or two younger. His fingers were long and supple and he dealt the cards with swift, sure movements. He was a lean man, lean almost to the point of being consumptive. His mouth was twisted into a sardonic smile. Directly across from him sat a man who seemed to be his older brother. A man of forty-five, but without the lean man's pallid complexion; a ruddy man with a long, carefully trimmed mustache, well manicured nails. His hands were clumsier than the younger dealer's.

The fourth man was a middle-aged cattleman, even if he did wear a silk hat.

WHAT HAPPENED TO CROSS-PATCH?

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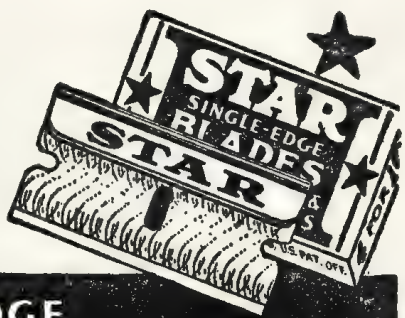

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The shabby man opened the pot for ten dollars and was promptly raised twenty. When the lean dealer swept in the pot a couple of minutes later, there was over a hundred dollars in it. Bonniwell caught the man's eyes.

The man smiled. "Want to sit in?"

Bonniwell nodded. "Looks like an interesting game." They made room for him and he sat down. "My name's Barat," said the lean man. "Jeff Barat. This is my brother, Ferdinand Barat."

The others introduced themselves. The man in buckskin said his name was Woeltjen. The rancher called himself Pearson. Bonniwell gave the name he had used for the past few months—John Wells.

He brought out a hundred dollars and put it on the table before him.

"Is this enough to start?" he asked.

"Yes, if you've more behind it," said Jeff Barat. He passed the cards to his older brother, who began to shuffle clumsily.

Jeff Barat studied Bonniwell's face. "Haven't I seen you somewhere?"

Bonniwell shrugged. "I've been in St. Louis since last fall. Have you been there?"

"Only passing through."

The buffalo hunter, Woeltjen, opened the pot for ten dollars. Bonniwell, with a pair of tens, stayed. Pearson raised twenty dollars and was promptly raised the same amount by Jeff Barat. Ferdinand Barat gave careful consideration to his cards, then called. The others were satisfied.

Woeltjen drew three cards. Bonniwell, on a hunch, held a queen with his tens and drew two. Pearson took only one card. Jeff Barat showed even white teeth in a smile and drew three cards.

Bonniwell drew another ten and an ace. He riffled the cards together and laid them flat on the table, face down. Woeltjen made a big show of counting out forty dollars. "Poker's goin' up, folks," he announced.

Bonniwell picked up his cards, looked at them and laid them down again. Then he looked sharply at Jeff Barat, began counting out money and looked again at Barat. He threw forty dollars into the pot.

Pearson tossed his cards into the discard. He had raised before the draw on a possible flush. Barat smiled thinly, counted out forty dollars and added more to it. He shoved it all into the center of the table.

"And one hundred," he said pleasantly.

Woeltjen growled deep in his throat, scowled furiously and after two or three false moves to count out money, tossed in his cards. The older Barat also dropped out.

Bonniwell got out all the money he had in his pockets. "And forty. I'd just as soon drop out after one hand as a dozen."

Jeff Barat's face showed no emotion at all. He counted out the forty and said, "I have a pair of kings."

Woeltjen howled. "And I threw away three eights!"

"They wouldn't have been good," said Bonniwell. "I have three tens." He laid them down and began pulling in the pot.

"You don't bluff," said Jeff Barat.

Bonniwell made a deprecating gesture. Barat had merely tested Bonniwell. He was a ferocious poker player, absolutely without mercy, but he seldom bluffed. Bonniwell found that out several pots later.

The buffalo hunter lost steadily, hundreds of dollars. Pearson played a close game and lost a little. Ferdinand Barat played clumsily but his brother spared him, and his losses, while heavy, were not as big as the buffalo hunter's. Bonniwell played his usual game, entirely without emotion, as the cards came. He won. Not as much as Jeff Barat, but enough. At the end of an hour he was ahead over a thousand dollars.

THE train stopped at Leavenworth for ten minutes, then rolled on again. The buffalo hunter's gold was gone and a good many of his bills. He swore roundly but without rancor every time he lost a pot.

The train stopped. Bonniwell, his mind on his cards, thought nothing of it until Jeff Barat's moderate voice seemed suddenly loud. He realized it was because of the hush that had fallen upon

the car. He looked up—and saw the two masked men at the far end of the car.

One of them spoke. "All right, just sit tight and no one'll be hurt!"

A woman screamed. One of the masked men marched down the aisle. There was a Colt in either hand.

"A holdup!" yelped Woeltjen. He started reaching for the gun at his thigh underneath the table, but Barat stopped him with a word. "Don't!"

The masked man stopped in the aisle, five feet away.

"That's a lot of money you boys got there!" he said in a calm voice.

"It is," said Jeff Barat.

The bandit made a swift movement. The gun in his left hand slid into his holster and a small gunny sack that had been tucked under his belt flipped to the table. "Put it in there—all of it."

Jeff Barat made no move. His older brother, his face white and tense, snarled, "Fine country you brought me to, Jeff!"

Bonniwell was looking steadily at the masked man's eyes. They were cold and pale blue through the slits in the cloth mask. The man finally sensed that Bonniwell was staring at him and his eyes met Bonniwell's.

"*You* put the money in the sack," he said.

Bonniwell picked up the sack, tossed his own money into it and then quickly gathered together the rest. He knew that his card companions were staring hostilely at him. When all the money on the table was in the bag, he shoved it to the edge of the table. The bandit did not pick it up.

"No," he said, "I think Mr. Barat has more money."

Jeff Barat scowled. "A few dollars. You want that, too?"

"Not yours," replied the bandit. "Your brother's."

Ferdinand Barat gasped. "Me? Why—I don't know what you're talking about."

"I can read," retorted the bandit. "And they print newspapers. You gave out an interview in St. Louis—"

"Jeff," began Ferdinand Barat. "I didn't want to come out here—"

"All right," snapped his brother. "We lose a trick. We'll win the next. Give him the money you've got with you."

Ferdinand Barat opened his waistcoat, reached under his broadcloth shirt and brought out a thick money belt. He shoved it beside the gunny sack.

"There's ten thousand dollars in that," he said grimly.

"A day's profit in the stock market," replied the bandit.

He picked up the money belt and the sack. But before he backed away his eyes stared again at Bonniwell. Bonniwell remained impassive. Every cent of money he had in the world was going away with the train robber, but he made no protest.

The bandits did not molest any of the other passengers, a fact on which Jeff Barat commented. "They stopped the train for just that ten thousand—"

The bandits backed out of the end of the car and slammed the door. Woeltjen yanked out his gun then and began pushing away from the table. "Let me out. Mebbe I can get a shot—!"

There was a rattle of gunfire outside the train, then the drumming of horses' hoofs.

"No use," said Jeff Barat.

His brother began to curse. He did it well for a man from the East. "For that you brought me out to this damned wilderness—"

"Easy, Ferd," snapped Jeff Barat. "What's ten thousand to what you'll make out of this country?"

"Lucky I'm going to Baker, instead of away," said Pearson, the cattleman.

"You've a herd coming to Baker?" Jeff Barat asked.

Pearson nodded. "Six thousand head. My foreman's handling the drive. I took a Morgan ship to New Orleans, then came upriver. Thought I'd go direct to Chicago and make a dicker with the packers. Found they're all here in Kansas, doing their buying at railhead."

"Your herd's coming to Baker, Mr. Pearson?" Jeff Barat asked. "Like to talk to you about it."

"Jesse James!" someone in the car yelled. "The James gang, that's who they was."

"Ah, hell!" snarled Woeltjen. "Every damn holdup in this country is laid to the Jameses. Me, I don't know of no

one who ever even saw the James boys."

"This is their country," remarked Jeff Barat. "I wonder—" He looked at Bonniwell.

BONNIWELL returned Barat's look steadily. After a moment he got up. "As I've no more money to continue playing, I guess I'll get some sleep."

"Goin' a long way?" asked Barat.

"Not very far."

There was a question in Barat's eyes, but Bonniwell did not answer it. He went on to his own seat. Someone had appropriated the seat he had occupied by the window. A woman. Bonniwell looked down at her.

She was not like the expensively dressed women on the train. She was as beautiful as any of them; her clothes were as good. Yet she was not rouged. And she did not have the same expression.

She saw him looking down, flushed, then looked up at the baggage rack.

"Oh!" she exclaimed. "Did I take your seat?"

"Not at all," said Bonniwell. "I shouldn't have left." He looked quickly up the aisle, saw no other vacant seats than the one beside her.

He sat down. He was embarrassed. He always was in the presence of women. Even with Eleanor Simmons he had never become entirely at ease.

He sat in silence for a moment. Then the girl spoke. "Do you suppose that was really the notorious Jesse James?"

"Yes," he replied. "And the big man was Cole Younger."

"How do you know?" she exclaimed.

"I met a man once who had a quiet voice and blue eyes," said Bonniwell. "He didn't say he was Jesse James, but he didn't deny it."

"But didn't he take your money?"

"Every cent I had."

"There were only two of them," she said, then caught herself. "Oh, but of course! You're not armed."

"If I had been I wouldn't have drawn against Jesse, with his gun on me. Not for mere money."

She looked at him. "You've been in this country before, haven't you?"

"Several years. Since the war."

"I'm from Illinois. Oh, I forgot. My name's Lou Sager. I'm going to Baker."

"Baker? You've relatives there?"

"No. Not at all. I read in a newspaper that the city is booming and so I—well, I thought it offered an opportunity to me."

"Baker isn't a city," said Bonniwell. "It's a little town of about 600 population."

"Oh, but that article I read said the population was around 5,000!"

"The paper was right, and it wasn't," said Bonniwell. "Baker's a trail town."

Her smooth white forehead creased. "A trail town? What do you mean?"

"It's on the Chisholm Trail. In winter it has a population of 600. But during the cattle season it swells to four and five thousand population. It's a wild place."

"Yes, I read that in the paper. That's why I'm going there. The article said that these cattlemen who come to Baker to sell their stock for enormous prices and spend practically all their money right away, mostly on luxuries they take back to Texas with them. I understand their women get really few up-to-date clothes, hats for example—"

"Hats?" Bonniwell asked blankly.

She smiled. "I'm a milliner. The Texas men spend huge amounts for their—what do they call them, ten-gallon hats? Isn't it natural then they'd want to buy fine hats for their women to take home? That's what I thought. So I'm going to Baker to open a millinery shop."

"Oh, Lord!" said John Bonniwell under his breath.

"Did you say something?"

"Yes. Did you talk that plan over with anyone before you started out for here?"

"Just my mother. She's in Springfield, Illinois. I had a little store there, but it wasn't doing very well. So I sold it out and decided to try out here where the country is booming. I intend to send for mother when I get established."

Bonniwell drew a deep breath. "Miss, I was in Baker last year. It was *hell!*"

She looked startled. "I don't understand!"

"No. You don't. Or you wouldn't

have come out here. Baker is a wild place. Twenty-two men were killed there last year. How many this year, I don't know. Gunfights are almost hourly occurrences."

"Oh," she scoffed. "I've heard of all that. I believe it's greatly exaggerated. Granted that these frontier cities are wild, surely no one would *shoot* a woman."

"You've never met a Texas man," said Bonniwell soberly. "In his home country he's a desirable citizen. But every Texas man is a gunman. He's raised with a gun. It takes months to drive a herd of cattle to Trail Town. During that time the herders see no women, no civilized communities. They get lonesome, vicious. Then they reach a trail town and receive a year's wages. They try to spend it as quickly as possible. On liquor, other things. They raise hell, Miss!"

For a full moment she looked at him, her eyes wide, then she blinked. "You're painting a rather black picture. I've always heard Southerners were chivalrous, courteous gentlemen—"

"The Texas gentlemen stay at home. The Texas men who come with the herds are not planters. They're cattle men. You'll see. We reach Baker in a half hour."

The Barats, Bonniwell saw, were also getting off at Baker. Bonniwell helped Lou Sager with her carpet bag. He saw her worried look as she got off the train and looked out across the town.

"It—doesn't look very cheerful, does it?" she asked doubtfully.

Bonniwell looked up the dusty street. He saw the flimsy building jammed side by side on both sides of the street. He saw swirling crowds of men—and he heard the banging of guns.

"I think," he said, "Baker is treed!"

CHAPTER III

TRAIL TOWN

BY the time they got the Pearson herd into the wide roadway that was the Chisholm Trail, the cowboys with the drive were on fairly good terms. Each cowboy knew the stature and mettle of the other. They'd had their squabbles while rounding up the wild steers.

Clem Hawks, the foreman, was satisfied with his riders. If any bunch could push a herd of three thousand wild Longhorns up the nine hundred mile trail, this bunch could.

Hawks had been up the trail four times before. He'd been to Abilene twice, Caldwell once and Wichita once. This time he was headed for Baker, Kansas. His previous trips had been hard. They had taxed his strength to the limit.

The four trips combined had been as a picnic compared to this, the fifth. Two days north of Austin the herd stampeded.

It took three full days to get it back on the trail. Then, by count, there were sixty head more than there should have been. Hawks let the extras stay with the herd.

The Salt Fork River was a roaring torrent, a half mile wide and full of driftwood. The lead steers refused to enter the water. Hawks and a couple of men waded their horses deep into the river, while some of the other cowboys tried by might and main to get the leaders of the herd into the water. They balked every time.

They had to give it up. A thunderstorm started up shortly after dark, and men spent the entire night in frantic endeavor to prevent the herd from stampeding again. The river was impassable the next morning. Not until the third day were they able to get across.

The Cimarron was at flood stage and it took two days to cross it. The cattle stampeded four times during the next week and Hawks ordered the men to shoot the half dozen leaders, knowing that animals sometimes get the stampede habit and never lose it.

Comanches, even though bribed with several steers, harried the herd. Twice the Pearson cowboys had to drive the Indians off with guns.

By the time they neared the Kansas line the fourteen cowboys with the Pearson steers scarcely spoke to one another. Then one evening Jim Malachy rode into the camp on a spent bronc.

He was whiskered and gaunt, ragged

and dirty from a hard trip. Only his guns were in good condition.

"Howdy, Clem," he greeted the foreman as he hunkered down by the campfire.

Clem Hawks regarded him sourly. "The only other trouble we needed was you, Malachy. Who'd you kill in Texas?"

"Nobody much," replied Malachy. "Just an ornery deputy who tried to arrest me."

Hawks grunted. "You'll never be an old man, Malachy."

"Don't want to be," Malachy chuckled. "When do we reach town, Clem? Want to see if they're as much fun as the boys say they are."

Hawks blinked. "They don't stand for hurrahing up here any more."

"The hell you say, Hawks. Why, the Brown outfit's braggin' all over Victoria County how they got two peace marshals last fall. You goin' to let the folks at home think the Browns are a better outfit than the Pearsons?"

"Stop that kind o' talk, Malachy!" snapped Hawks. "We've had enough trouble on this trip, 'thout lettin' any of the boys stay up here in Boot Hill."

Malachy rose to his feet and grinned down on Clem Hawks.

"Just as you say, Clem," he said. He moved away from the fire and went around to the cowboys, most of whom he knew. They knew him, too—the worst of the Malachy boys.

Malachy was good for the morale of the cowboys, however. Hawks had to admit that a couple of days later. He did practically no work, but the cowboys stopped quarreling and fighting among themselves. They were much too interested in listening to Malachy.

He told good stories. During the war, he'd been a captain under McCulloch during the early Missouri campaigns. Later he'd been transferred to the Army of Northern Virginia and had commanded a regiment at Winchester. He was with Lee at Appomattox Court House.

And then he had returned to Texas to find the large Malachy family land cattle-rich and money-poor.

He went to New Orleans and learned the vocation of gambling. He killed a man at Natchez and returned to Texas. He bought a couple of horses and raced them for a season or two. In East Texas a disgruntled loser accused him of doping a horse. Naturally, Malcahy killed him. He had to leave so quickly he left his race horses behind. He visited with relatives throughout the state, got into gambling scrapes and shot a man or two. There were several warrants out for his arrest, but around Austin, his home territory, he was reasonably safe. Until now.

So he was finally "going north." And it was the ill fortune of Clem Hawks to get him along with his trail herd.

Well, Hawks' own responsibility would soon be over. Mr. Pearson would meet him at Baker and the herd would no doubt be sold shortly thereafter. In the meantime he was keeping the boys entertained with his wild stories.

NINE days into Kansas and Clem Hawks made final camp.

"We're twenty miles from Baker," he told the cowboys. "We stay here until Mr. Pearson sells the herd, then we drive it to town."

"Twenty miles from Baker!" exclaimed Pete Youmans. "Hell, I thought we were going right to town."

"We've got to keep the herd together," said Hawks. "I can only let four of you go at a time."

It didn't take the lucky four more than five minutes to get ready. Jim Malachy prepared to go with them. Clem Hawks watched him with a brooding eye.

"You're not under my orders, Malachy," Hawks said, "but the rest of you are. Remember, you get into trouble, you get out by yourselves." He was lying and the boys knew it. Hawks would go to the last ditch for his boys.

They raced away from the camp, the four cowboys and Jim Malachy.

Three hours later they came to the toll bridge, on the other side of which was Baker. They could see the lights of it and hear the noise. They were impatient to get to it. A watchman stepped into the middle of the bridge and said:

"Two bits apiece, boys."

Jim Malachy yanked out a Frontier Model and sent a bullet past the watch-

man's hat. The four cowboys promptly spurred their horses. The watchman had to jump aside to keep from being ridden down.

"Here she is, boys!" cried Jim Malachy. "Our town! Let's see what makes her tick."

They had no trouble finding the Longhorn Saloon, even though it was already dark. It was the biggest saloon on Main Street, having a dance hall in connection.

They tied their horses outside the saloon and stamped in, ragged and dirty and wild. The saloon was jammed with more than a hundred men. The moment he stepped inside, Jim Malachy drew his guns and fired two shots into the ceiling.

"The Pearson outfit's just in from Texas!" he roared.

"Yip-ee!" yelled the four cowboys with him.

Instantly a man with a badge on his vest stepped over to them.

"Where do you think you're at?" he snapped.

"In Kansas," retorted Jim Malachy. "You want to make somethin' of it?"

"I do," said the marshal. "Hand over them guns. You ain't shootin' up this town."

The four cowboys looked to Malachy for leadership. The good humor left the Texas killer's face.

"My name's Jim Malachy," he said, "I never gave my guns to anyone. You want to *take* them?"

With Malachy's speech the cowboys behind him stiffened. The marshal looked at them, hesitated and was lost.

"All right," he said. "But take things easy."

The five Texas men brushed the lawman aside and marched to the bar.

"Whiskey!" roared Jim Malachy. "Quarts of it. The Pearson outfit's drinkin'!"

There were nine Texas men to every Kansan in the saloon. Inside of five minutes the place was in an uproar. The newcomers had defied the law and got away with it. The Texans who were already here and had been behaving reasonably well threw off all restraint.

The marshal slipped out of the saloon. He did not reappear that evening. The town of Baker belonged to the Texans that night. They drank and caroused and whooped it up until dawn. Then some of them rode out to their camps on the nearby prairie. Others settled down here and there to sleep.

But not the Pearson cowboys. Somehow they attached a group to them and went from saloon to saloon. When their money ran out they chased the bartenders from behind the bars and helped themselves to liquor. One bartender pulled a shotgun from under the bar and they took it away from him and clubbed him insensible.

They wrecked a restaurant at seven in the morning because the proprietor claimed he didn't have enough eggs and ham to feed them all.

A HEALTH WARNING!

Printed in the interest of public well-being!

IF YOU'RE nursing a cold—*see a doctor!* Curing a cold is the doctor's business. But there are certain precautions which, if taken in time, may help you to ward off a cold.

For instance, your own doctor will tell you that when your body resistance is high, you are not apt to "take cold so easily." And he'll also tell you that "keeping regular" is a great aid in maintaining a higher resistance.

So, keep your bowels open! And when a laxative is needed, use Ex-Lax! Ex-Lax is mild and gentle, yet thoroughly effective. And Ex-Lax is a real pleasure to take—it tastes like delicious chocolate.

For more than 30 years, Ex-Lax has been America's favorite family laxative. It's as good for children as it is for grown-ups. At all druggists in 10¢ and 25¢ sizes. Get a box of Ex-Lax today!

When Nature forgets—remember

EX-LAX

THE ORIGINAL CHOCOLATED LAXATIVE

AT NINE o'clock Mayor Olcott cornered his law enforcement body, consisting of a marshal and two deputies, and issued orders to drive the drunken Texans from Baker.

The marshal remembered seeing a notice in the sheriff's office about one Jim Malachy, wanted in Texas, and passed the buck to the sheriff.

"He's your man, Stengel," he said. "There's five hundred reward for his scalp and I wouldn't do you out of it."

"The hell you wouldn't," snarled the sheriff. He stormed about his office, biting his mustache; then he took off his two gunbelts and hung them up on a nail.

He drew one of the guns from its holster and stuck the gun into the waistband of his trousers. After that he got his coat and put it on, buttoning it tightly. It completely concealed the gun in his waistband.

"Gonna take him by guile?" asked the marshal sarcastically.

The sheriff cursed.

"I don't know why I ever quit the bone pickin' business," he said. He went out of his office, slamming the door.

It was easy enough to find Malachy. There were still fifty Texas men with him and they hadn't quieted any since the evening before.

They were in the Cimarron Saloon. Sheriff Stengel went in and worked his way quietly to the bar. It was five minutes before Malachy noticed him.

"Who the hell are you?" he demanded then.

Sheriff Stengel shrugged. "You're Jud Pearson's cousin, aren't you?"

"What if I am?"

"Nothin'. Except Jud telegraphed me that you were comin'. Said to tell you everything's fixed in Texas."

"How'd Jud know I was here?"

"I wouldn't know. I got his telegram here—"

Sheriff Stengel slipped his hand under his coat lapels, presumably reaching for the telegram. His hand came out—with the Frontier Model Colt. The muzzle of it jammed into Jim Malachy's stomach.

"Here's the telegram!" the sheriff snarled. "And any o' your herd try anythin', you get it first, Malachy, right through the guts!"

The cowboys almost lifted the roof with their roar. Guns flashed, but no one came close to the sheriff and Malachy. The boys had been out with the killer all night. They had recognized him as their leader and they would not now jeopardize his life.

Malachy grinned feebly. "Guess you got me, sheriff."

"You guess right. Hand me your guns, butt first."

Malachy made an elaborate show of drawing his weapons from their holsters. He tendered them butt first to the sheriff. The sheriff reached for them —and Baker saw, for the first time, the spin that was to become famous in later years. Malachy kept his forefingers in the trigger guards of the pistols. As he held the guns out butt first, he made a quick, almost imperceptible movement and the guns twirled completely around, so the muzzles were pointing forward instead of the butts. At the instant the butts slapped into Malachy's palms, his hands contracted and the guns thundered.

The sheriff was dead before he hit the floor of the saloon.

JOHN BONNIWELL looked down the main street. A couple of blocks away he saw a moving knot of men. He saw puffs of smoke billowing out from among them; he heard the banging of guns.

He scooped up Lou Sager's bag, tucked it under his left arm, then picked up his own with the same hand. With his other hand he caught her arm. "We'd better get off the street. Trouble's coming our way."

He led her hurriedly to the express office, a half block away. In their wake trailed the Barat Brothers and two or three other passengers, who had, to their sorrow, alighted from the train at Baker.

A man was peeking out of the door of the express office.

"What's all the shooting about?" Bonniwell asked.

"Jim Malachy," exclaimed the agent. "He killed the sheriff this morning.

Judge Atwater acquitted him because the sheriff drew first. The mayor objected and Malachy felt insulted. He and his gang began shooting up the town a couple of hours ago. Looks like it'll be treed for the rest of the summer."

"Haven't you got a town marshal?" Bonniwell asked.

The express agent snorted. "Three. They remembered they had private business somewhere. Law's what Baker ain't got today." Well, it was none of John Bonniwell's affair. He carried his and Lou Sager's bags into the building.

"Mr. Wells," said a voice. "John Wells!"

There were eight or nine persons in the room, four of them women. Bonniwell saw only one, though.

"Miss Simmons!" he exclaimed. "How did you come here?"

Eleanor Simmons held out her hand to Bonniwell. "This *is* a surprise!" She was smiling radiantly, and John Bonniwell's nostrils flared as he looked into her flushed face.

"You knew I was coming here. Remember? I'm going to visit my uncle Oliver in Broken Lance. I'm on my way there now."

"How long've you been here?" he asked inanely.

"Since yesterday."

"But why'd you stay over? Baker's no place—"

The express agent was inside, now, putting thick, wooden shutters over the windows.

"Stage didn't run yesterday," he said. "Bandits held it up, killed the driver."

"But where'd you stay overnight?" Bonniwell persisted.

"Why, at the Baker Hotel. Of course, it's not the Planters Hotel. But still—"

The Baker Hotel. Thin, boarded walls, cubbyholes above the roaring Baker Saloon and Dance Hall. Eleanor Simmons had remained there overnight. Bonniwell shook his head. Then he turned to the express agent, who was dropping a bar across the door.

"The stage is leaving today, isn't it?"

"Maybe," snorted the agent. "If those damned Texas men will let it."

Someone banged against the door.

"Lemme in!" cried a frightened voice. "Lemme in."

"There's enough people in here now," cried the agent.

"Lemme in!" repeated the frantic voice outside. "Damn you, lemme in. This is Olcott, the mayor!"

Bonniwell stepped to the door and raised the wooden bar. A short, paunchy man fell into the little office. A bullet kicked up dirt at his heels. Olcott howled and leaped behind the stove.

"Close the door, you!" cried the agent from behind the sheet iron stove.

Bonniwell reached to close the door, and a bullet grazed his coat sleeve and slammed into the partly closed door. He stepped away.

"Come on out of there, Olcott!" yelled a raucous voice.

A woman behind Bonniwell moaned. He knew that it wasn't either Eleanor Simmons or Lou Sager. He turned and surveyed the persons in the room. Jeff Barat was leaning carelessly against the wall—on the safe side. His brother was trying to cower behind Jeff's slenderer figure.

"What's the matter with your law, Mayor?" Bonniwell asked.

Olcott cursed loudly. "Stengel is dead and the damned marshals are hiding. The yellow rats!"

"Come on out, Olcott," yelled the voice out on the street. "Come out or we'll come get you. And we'll come shootin'!"

"Go on, get outside!" snarled the express agent. "You're the mayor." He shoved the fat little mayor.

Olcott howled and wrestled with the agent. The agent hit him in the face and the mayor went sprawling to the dirt floor.

"Cut it, you two!" snapped Bonniwell. "Isn't it bad enough without you fighting in here? Olcott, you'd better go out. There're women here. If Malachy and his gang come in to get you, the women'll get hurt."

"I don't go outside," yelled Olcott. "Go out yourself."

"I'm not a city official," retorted Bonniwell. "I'm just a customer waiting for the stage."

"Then keep your mouth shut! You

aint even got a gun. What's the matter, you afraid to carry one?"

Several bullets smashed into the front of the express office. The yells on the street became a chorus. "We're coming, Olcott! And we're comin' shootin'!"

Bonniwell looked around the circle of drawn faces. Four women. If the Texas men came in shooting, the women stood an excellent chance of being killed, even though the Texans might suddenly become chivalrous and try to keep their bullets only for Olcott.

Bonniwell stooped and tore open his carpet bag. He whipped out a long, Frontier Model Colt. He spun the cylinder and stuck the gun into the waistband of his trousers.

Then he stepped out of the office.

IN THE middle of the dusty street was a clump of wild-eyed, drunken Texans. There were at least twenty of them, all armed. John Bonniwell faced them, his hands hanging loosely at his sides.

Comanches harried the herd . . .

He picked out the leader of the mob, a gaunt, black-bearded man, who had a Colt in each hand.

"You!" Blackbeard roared. "Who're you?"

Bonniwell said, "Drop those guns, Jim Malachy!"

Malachy was forty feet from Bonniwell, but Bonniwell could see the Texan blink in astonishment. He saw, too, the rise of Malachy's shoulders and knew that those guns were coming up in a second—and would spout!

For Bonniwell to draw meant death. Death for himself and some of those in the express office behind him. Yet the only thing he could do was draw.

"Bonniwell!" cried a voice behind Malachy. "It's John Bonniwell!"

Bonniwell saw the shudder that ran through Jim Malachy; he was aware that the men behind the black-bearded Texan were suddenly shuffling. They knew him now. But they were twenty to one.

He kept his eyes on Jim Malachy's right hand. He saw the hand move up an inch, stop.

Among men of guns, news of men with guns travels far. Even in Texas Malachy had heard of John Bonniwell.

"Bonniwell," he said hoarsely. "I thought you were dead!"

"*You* will be," replied Bonniwell, "if you don't drop those guns at once."

Malachy stared at Bonniwell. He could see that the lean man wore no holsters, that he had only the one .45 stuck in his waistband, an awkward place from which to draw.

And Malachy had two guns in his hands and his followers all had their own weapons ready. They could kill Bonniwell, a feat that would earn them homage up and down the length of the Chisholm Trail.

But Malachy knew, too, that he could not kill Bonniwell before Bonniwell got that gun out of his waistband and fired at least once. And Malachy knew where that one bullet would land.

Jim Malachy let his guns fall to the dust.

John Bonniwell's hands remained at his sides.

"You're smart, Jim," he said. "You'll be smarter, though, if you tell your men to drop *their* guns. There's women back there in the stage office and you wouldn't want to see them get hurt, would you?"

"No," said Jim Malachy. He half turned his head. "Boys, do as John Bonniwell says."

And they did!

Twenty men dropped their guns to the street. They wouldn't have done that for any other man in the West except John Bonniwell.

Bonniwell heard the thump of feet behind him. He said, without turning, "Get a sack and gather up those guns. Take them to Malachy's camp—later."

"John Bonniwell!" said the voice of Olcott, the mayor of Baker. "You're Bonniwell." He came up beside Bonniwell, his eyes bulging in awe.

Bonniwell kept his gaze on the Texas men.

"Get those guns, Olcott!" he ordered. "Get them before they change their minds."

The Texas men weren't changing their minds, though. Not today. They were retreating across the street. Bonniwell watched until Olcott had gathered up the last gun, then he turned abruptly and went back into the express office.

THE AGENT and two or three of the others had come out. They stared at Bonniwell. He did not look at them. He stepped inside the little room and looked at Eleanor Simmons.

She had come from behind the stove, stood beside it. And her face was dead. Her eyes were wide and unblinking.

"You're John Bonniwell," she said tonelessly. "You're the man we talked about in the hospital. The Haleyville gunfighter who killed all those men."

"Yes," he admitted in a low voice. "I changed my name because of the newspapers. They wouldn't—"

"John Bonniwell," Eleanor went on, not seeming to hear him. "You're the man the newspapers said was the most notorious killer in the entire West."

He said evenly: "I have never killed anyone who didn't need killing, who didn't try to kill me first."

Lou Sager, at one side, could contain herself no longer. "You just saw what he did! He saved our lives. Are you condemning the man for that?"

"No," said Eleanor Simmons. "I'm not condemning him for anything. Perhaps . . . in this country . . . the John Bonniwells are necessary. But I—his hands are red—red with the blood of men he's killed."

Eleanor Simmons laughed hysterically. "Why, when I went back to Illinois from St. Louis I saw some boys playing a game. I heard them. They were quarreling. They all wanted to be John Bonniwell. Bonniwell the killer!"

Bonniwell turned abruptly and walked out of the express office.

"Bonniwell!" cried Olcott, the mayor. "You're the man I've been waiting for. I want you to be marshal of Baker. I'll pay you two hundred and fifty dollars a month."

Bonniwell walked past him.

"Four hundred!" cried the mayor. "And three dollars for every arrest you make."

Bonniwell walked up the street. But already the word had gone ahead of

him. It had leaped from mouth to mouth, from saloon to saloon.

"Bonniwell's here. John Bonniwell's alive and he's here!"

The fight in Haleyville last year had been national news. In the West it had been a tremendous sensation. Bonniwell against four men, every one a notorious gunfighter. He'd killed all of them. He had been riddled wih bullets himself, so badly wounded word had gone around that he couldn't live. Then he had disappeared and after a while men said that he was dead. Law officers had buried him and wanted to keep it a secret.

John Bonniwell became a legend. For six months men had believed him dead. He had gone out in a blaze of glory. And now—now he had come back as spectacularly as he had gone.

The curse of John Bonniwell was that everything he did was spectacular.

CHAPTER VI

LEAD FOR HIRE

WHEN Bonniwell entered the Baker Hotel he was given the best room in the house, a corner one, overlooking the street, but on the side opposite from where the dance hall was below. The quiet side.

He went upstairs and took out two cartridge belts from his carpet bag. The other Frontier Model Colt with the eight inch barrels, too.

The die was cast. He'd been recognized in Baker. They knew he was back. From now on his life was in continual danger. There were Texas men who remembered him from Haleyville. And here in Baker were Jim Malachy and his crew. He had won a victory over them, but that didn't mean they'd remain cowed. Liquor breeds courage in some men. Bonniwell didn't mind brave men so much. It was the others, the ones deathly afraid of him that he feared. Such men would shoot on slight provocation, perhaps no provocation at all. And they might not always give proper warning. A dark spot, a turned back was often enough incentive.

There was brackish water in a cracked pitcher. He poured some of it into a thick china basin and washed his hands and face.

Then he put on a clean white shirt and strapped both cartridge belts around his waist. He tested the actions of the Colts, saw they were loaded, five shells in each, an empty chamber under the hammers.

He had to show himself in Baker. You had to show yourself after a victory, otherwise men might believe that reaction had set in and you were afraid. He buckled gun belts about his waist.

He came out of the hotel, stood in front of the place for a few minutes. Then he began a deliberate stroll along the wooden sidewalk that bordered the east side of the street. He walked two blocks, to the railroad depot, then crossed to the west side of the street and walked back. No one talked to him during the entire trip, yet every man looked at him and knew him.

After he finished his tour he looked at his watch, a heavy gold piece, and found it was almost six o'clock. He saw a sign: "Good Eats" and turned in.

There was a counter inside, also a half dozen tables with checkered cloths. He sat down at one of the tables, carelessly choosing the side where his back would be against the wall.

A pert looking girl in a gingham dress came to take his order. He asked for beefsteak and fried potatoes and the girl went to the kitchen.

He put his elbows on the table and watched the street outside. After a minute he inhaled sharply. A man had stopped before the window, was peering in. He saw Bonniwell and slammed open the door.

"John!" he cried.

Bonniwell got to his feet. "Tom," he said.

They shook hands and held the grip just a bit longer than was necessary. Then Tom Waggoner sat down opposite Bonniwell. "I just heard a few minutes ago that you were—alive."

Warmth flooded through Bonniwell. This man was his closest friend, the only man he would have trusted to watch his back in a gun battle, though Waggoner wasn't a gunfighter.

"You were in Colorado, Tom," he said.

"Yes. I heard about it two weeks after it happened. But the paper said you were killed. When I got to Haleyville the Texas men owned the town. No one seemed to know anything about you. And then I had to go on another surveying trip. Where were you, John?"

"St. Louis. All winter. I just got off this damned train here this afernoon."

"I know. The town's buzzing."

"How're they taking it?"

Waggoner shrugged. "With plenty of liquor. It sticks in their throats. Malachy realizes now he lost face. John, I'm taking another trip. Why don't you come along?"

Bonniwell smiled wanly. "If you'll wait a couple of days."

Waggoner sighed. "All right, I'll wait, but I'd rather go now. I know how you are. But, John, I'm glad you're back. Have you any plans?"

"Nary a plan. I thought some of going to Texas and raising cattle, but I guess I just couldn't get along with Texas folks."

Waggoner chuckled. "Not unless you change your name."

The waitress brought Bonniwell's food and Waggoner ordered a similar portion for himself. When the girl had gone again Waggoner said, "John, I'm headed for a place called Broken Lance. Do you know it?"

Bonniwell looked sharply at Waggoner. "Yes, I've heard about it."

"Come with me to Broken Lance. I'm going there to do some building for the railroad."

"Is it going to touch Broken Lance?"

"Yes. That's what I wanted to tell you about. They're building now. The road will be there inside of thirty days. It's going due West. West, not southwest. Do you know what that means?"

Bonniwell considered for a moment. "Why, it will be the closest railroad point to Texas, won't it?"

"Exactly, and from now on Broken Lance will be trail's end for all herds. I happen to know there won't be a road going down into Texas for four or five years, at least. Do you know what that's going to do for Broken Lance? It's going to make it a city. A Wichita, a Dodge and a Baker, all rolled into one. Only it will be more permanent."

THE DOOR of the restaurant opened and Lou Sager looked in timidly. Bonniwell saw her and pushed back his chair.

"Miss Sager!" he called.

She saw him and smiled in obvious relief. She came into the restaurant.

"Will you have a seat with us?" he asked.

She looked doubtful. "Is it all right?"

"Oh, yes. This is Tom Waggoner, my friend."

Waggoner bowed. He did it well. Bonniwell knew that he was a Harvard man and came from a fine family. Waggoner's eyes sparkled as he looked at Lou Sager. "You're the milliner, aren't you?"

She was surprised. "Why, how did you know—through Mr. Bonniwell?"

Waggoner grinned boyishly. "Miss Sager, everyone knew all about you ten minutes after you got off the train. Well, how do you like it here?"

Bonniwell saw the little crease in her otherwise smooth forehead. "It's not exactly what I expected."

"I told you about it on the train, Miss Sager," Bonniwell said softly. "It can be even worse than you saw it today. Why don't you go back?"

She shook her head quickly, "Oh, I couldn't do that. I—I've burned my bridges."

Bonniwell sighed lightly. "Tom, would I be violating any confidence if I told Miss Sager about Broken Lance?"

"No, not in this case."

So Bonniwell told her about the future of Broken Lance, finishing with, "Baker will be dead in a month. If you started a store here, you'd be ruined. If you must stay out here, Broken Lance is the place to go. Although I'm warning you, the town will be as bad as this one—worse, probably, because there will be more of it."

"You're going there, Mr. Bonniwell?" she asked.

Waggoner answered for Bonniwell. "Yes. And so am I."

The three of them ate their dinners, and then Bonniwell realized with aston-

ishment that he didn't have a dollar in the world. He had checked into the hotel and come into the restaurant without even realizing he was broke.

Bonniwell led Waggoner to one side.

"Tom, I'm flat," he said. "Have you got any money?"

"Of course. How much do you want? I've got a thousand with me and around five thousand to my credit on the railroad's books."

"Let me have five hundred. I want to continue a game I was in with Jeff Barat on the train."

Waggoner scowled. "So he's around again."

Bonniwell nodded. "He's brought a brother with him. Seems to be an Eastern capitalist big enough for the Missouri Boys to stop the train. They got ten thousand from him."

"The Missouri Boys, eh?"

"They were masked, but I recognized Jesse and Cole Younger. I contributed my own stake."

"They must have caught you unawares."

"Not exactly, Tom. I didn't have my guns, but if I had I wouldn't have pulled them—not for a few hundred dollars. I don't think you know Jesse. I met him a year ago. There isn't a man in the West can pull a gun against him. Not that he's so fast, but just because he's the most desperate man in the country. They've been after him so long he's gun-shy. He'd kill a man who'd snap his fingers unexpectedly."

Tom Waggoner rubbed his smooth shaven chin with the back of his hand. "I didn't know he was in Kansas. There's some money going down on the stage tomorrow. We're building a depot, freight buildings and some pretty large loading pens in Broken Lance."

"Better get yourself a good man to ride shotgun."

"How about you, John? As long as you're going to Broken Lance, anyway."

During the long winter in St. Louis, Bonniwell had decided that he would never again engage in any work that required the use of a gun. But he couldn't turn down Tom Waggoner. He nodded. "All right, Tom."

They sat in the hotel lobby talking for an hour. Men came in and went to the saloon and dance hall. Soon the noise was so great that Bonniwell and Waggoner could scarcely hear each other.

Finally, the Barat brothers came down the stairs.

The older one was resplendent in Prince Albert and shining silk hat. Jeff Barat wore a Prince Albert, too, but his had a velvet collar and more of his starched cuffs showed at the wrists.

Jeff Barat said to Bonniwell, "That was good work this afternoon. I was sure I had seen you before."

"Jeff has told me about you, Mr. Bonniwell," the older Barat said. "Your name was mentioned in New York by Ned Buntline."

"Oh, yes," said Bonniwell. "He was in Haleyville last year. This is Mr. Waggoner."

BONNIWELL looked blandly at Jeff Barat. "Too bad you you lost all your loose change. I was hoping we might continue that game."

Jeff Barat showed his white teeth. "They were in a little too much of a hurry. Ferd had most of his roll in his boots."

He smiled pleasantly. "Gambling's my business, you know. What are we waiting for?"

"Not a thing," replied Bonniwell.

They walked into the saloon and the bartender seated them at a corner table. He brought cards. Jeff Barat pushed the deck to Bonniwell. "What'll it be? The same?"

Bonniwell nodded. He brought out the five hundred dollars he had just borrowed. Tom Waggoner brought out his own roll, a few dollars more than five hundred. Bonniwell looked with satisfaction at the size of the bills Ferd Barat brought out. Bonniwell dealt the cards around. Jeff Barat looked at his and said, "By the way, Mr. Bonniwell, do you suppose that was really Jesse James?"

Bonniwell shrugged. "Yes, it was. And the big man was Cole Younger."

"You've seen them before?"

"In Haleyville last year. They stopped off a couple of days."

Jeff Barat sighed heavily. "That fellow's luck is about due to run out. He's been at it a long time. I'm thinking I'd like to meet him again when the breaks aren't all on his side."

"Not me," said Bonniwell. "He's dangerous." He was looking past Jeff Barat and smiled suddenly.

"Hello, John," said a man. He was a tall, well-built young fellow, almost a boy, except for his serious, rather old expression.

"Hello, Bat," said Bonniwell. "How's things in Dodge?"

The young man shook hands with Bonniwell. Bonniwell turned to the others. "This is Bat Masterson, Mr. Waggoner, Mr. Jeff Barat, and Mr. Ferdinand Barat."

The others at the table shook hands with young Bat Masterson. Jeff Barat seemed particularly interested. "Heard a lot about you," he said. "Somehow I figgered you was an older man."

"I'm eighteen," said Bat Masterson.

"My friend Ned Buntline spoke about you," offered Ferdinand Barat.

Bat Masterson's eyes lit up. "He tell you about the buffalo hunt last year?"

"I don't recall it exactly. Seems I recollect that he talked mostly of hunting men. Bad men."

"How about sitting in, Mr. Masterson?" Jeff Barat asked.

"Why, sure, I'd like to."

Masterson, despite his youth, had been around. He was a good poker player, one of the best Bonniwell had ever met. Jeff Barat played his usual cold, merciless game. If Bonniwell had been matched only against Masterson and Jeff Barat, things would not have gone well with him. But the older Barat and Tom Waggoner, to a certain extent, offset the efficiency of the professional gambler and the young buffalo hunter. Bonniwell won slowly but steadily. At the end of four hours of playing, when the game broke up, he was ahead eight hundred dollars. Waggoner had lost about two hundred. Masterson and Jeff Barat were both big winners, the older Barat having contributed a large share of the losses.

"Sorry we can't play tomorrow," said Jeff Barat, "but we're leaving on the morning stage for Broken Lance."

"So are we," said Tom Waggoner. "John is going to ride shotgun."

Jeff Barat's eyes slitted. "How long are you going to stay there?" he asked, looking at Bonniwell.

Bonniwell shrugged. "I don't know." But he just remembered something—something he had forgotten when he had promised Tom Waggoner that he would ride shotgun.

The stage hadn't gone today. That meant Eleanor Simmons was still in Baker, due to go southwest tomorrow. She would be in the stagecoach. Bonniwell's eyes clouded at the thought.

(to be continued)

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THREE MAD SERGEANTS

by GEORGES SURDEZ

They exchanged shots at fifteen feet.

IN THE long shack used as a barracks for the troopers at Ras-el-Khaloua, Morocco, Legionnaires were beginning to stir. Dawn was barely breaking, and the bugler had not yet gone into the yard to sound the call. Old Man Magnus swung his naked feet to the cool scrubbed boards, stretched and reached for his pipe on his equipment shelf above the cot.

"Should have coffee in bed," he grumbled. "The service is lousy." Suddenly,

he looked down at his hands with an expression of intense surprise. The pipe in his left fist, the flaming match, were steady, absolutely steady. This was the first time in more years than he could count that he had opened his eyes cold sober and free from the shakes.

Magnus, Pierre-Achilles, Number 4912, was tall and lean, with long arms and legs, a high, thin face ornamented by a beak of a nose above a grayish, cropped mustache. At first glance, he seemed young; then his scanty hair, his leathery hide, the seams on neck and cheeks, revealed that he was at least forty-five. An old Legionnaire, with the veteran's neatness in dress and equipment—and a veteran's passion for the bottle.

He struck another match, holding it level with his eyes. It remained steady. Sweat gathered on his brows, then he shrugged. No, there was nothing queer about this, his system just was cleaned of alcohol. For weeks he had lived a Spartan existence, all drill, all work, without hard liquor. And the pint of wine served each day with his rations could not be counted as intoxicating in his case. No wonder his nerves had steadied!

Magnus, to tell the truth, deplored his state of grace. He would have given two fingers off either hand at just that moment for a quart of white wine—Algerian preferred, about fourteen per cent strong—or a good glass of Pernod. He had a magnificent thirst. But Pernod, absinthe, ainsette, marc, cognac, were fabulous delights of a remote, almost forgotten world. Khaloua had no trader, no canteen. Nothing, nothing except bleak rock, hard walls, rusted barbed wire, dirt, dust, wind and sun.

Nikirov, the Bulgarian, came softly to his side. He was a very large, fierce-looking chap, with a chest like a wardrobe trunk. But his mind was going fast, from loneliness, boredom and lack of drink. He suffered from a familiar delusion, buried treasure, but instead of gold, it was liquor he imagined.

"Quarts and quarts!" he whispered into Magnus' ear. Cases, cases of it. I know just where it's hidden. See, I was with the troops that took this place. I know where the Greek hid it. When we were attacked. Quarts and quarts—"

"Cut it, Nicki. You're going nuts."

"Absinthe and cognac. Champagne. Cases and cases."

Magnus' mouth watered and he grew sick. Those words affected him like some mystic incantation, like a litany. Absinthe and cognac, ainsette and marc—he could see the bottles himself, on shelves behind a zinc bar, the labels clear and beautiful. Just like he had seen ponds fringing with rushes, in the Sahara. Mirage!

"Shut up, shut up!" he snapped, holding a boot by the toe.

A young German, with cheeks like apples despite privations, pushed between the two. "Drop it, old man, drop it. Nikirov don't mean any harm. He wants it himself."

"He's crazy, that's what—"

"So what? Everybody in this dump is nuts one way or another. Everybody, you, me, Nicki, the sergeants. We want out, and we've got months to go. Come on, Nickie, tell me about it, eh? Bottles and bottles, cases and cases?"

"Ah, yes." The big fellow followed the other away, light on his feet despite his bulk. "See, there was even champagne for the officers' mess, and cognac—"

The bugler had gone out, and the call blasted into the silence outside, penetrating urgent. The men detailed for coffee left for the kitchen. Coffee—if you could call it that.

"Three mad sergeants," Magnus mused gloomily as he laced his boots. "Three maniacs. Larkorska's out and out crazy by now; Versini and the other guy aren't much better off."

He sucked at his pipe and stared in space, startled to find himself so worried.

The situation had not changed. But it seemed that he understood it better now, now that he was sober.

"There'll be a mess, sure. The Old Man should be told. Maybe he would ease up. No, no chance of that. He never goes back on his word. Six months, he said, and six months it's going to be. All is well!"

All was well. . . .

THEY were forty-two at Khaloua—forty-two Pariahs sentenced to exile, three sergeants and thirty-nine privates. Ras-el-Khaloua, the natives called this dump, the Mount of Solitude. The French staff maps shortened it to Khaloua, adding a tiny symbol to show that it was fortified. Walls, dirt, dust, wind and sun.

Around Khaloua Blockhouse, perched on its high, rugged peak, reached by a steep trail hewn from the solid stone with dynamite and picks, wheeled an immense, empty panorama, the southern hills of the Middle Atlas, naked and rocky, wide stretches of shale glittering in the light, shallow reddish earth sprouting runted bush and meager grass as if reluctantly. There was another post in sight, many miles away across a valley, and communications were possible. But neither the optical nor the radio brought personal messages to Khaloua. The forty-two were hung in time and space, hopeless, half of them going mad.

The coffee came in the big, steaming tins. It was hot, but tasted as if brewed from oak bark rather than toasted grains. The fellows who had gone for it brought news from the kitchen, gossip headquarters for the blockhouse.

"Versini and Mettermann had another row. Larkorska banged up one of the sentries. Pretty bad. The orderlies say the guy was coughing blood—"

"Who was it?"

"Perlynck. You know, he was moaning about the noise in the wires. And Larkorska fixed him."

Perlynck was a Belgian, perhaps thirty years old. He had delusions, and protested that the shriek of the wind was the wail of his small children, whom he had deserted in a Charleroi slum.

"The lousy Polack! Perlynck should be in an asylum. He's a sick man. Why don't he pick on Nick. Eh. Nikirov, what would you do if the sergeant socked you?"

The Bulgarian stopped thinking of bottles and cases with an effort, concentrated on this new idea. Slowly, the response of his brain was translated in speech. "I break his neck." The thought pleased him, and he illustrated with his hands, opening them wide enough to grasp a soup plate by the rim. "Like this. Crack."

Several men laughed in approval.

"You would, too, wouldn't you, Nick?"

"Sure, sure."

Magnus was disgusted with them. They hated the sergeant, and were priming this poor, dull-witted guy to buck Larkorska. And the Pole, mad with authority, would undoubtedly plug him. There would be bloodshed at Khaloua before long. Not a leak here and there, as had happened so far, but in industrial quantities! Somebody ought to stop it. Somebody ought to inform Captin Auxon.

Sergeant Mettermann's voice exploded outside.

"Out for drill and fatigues, in there! Do you want me to come in and clear you out with my boot?"

The men took their rifles from the racks, buckled the heavy belts weighed down by cartridge pouches around their aching loins. And they trotted out into the light.

THE trouble had really started five weeks before, although its origin dated back to midsummer.

Forty Legionnaires, whose names had appeared on the bulletin-board outside the company's office at Dar-Makhzen, Principal Post for the region, gathered in the courtyard, formed two long lines. They were fully equipped, ready to march, according to instructions. It was seven o'clock in the morning and the chill of the mountain air was perceptible. But it was not from cold that the men shivered as they looked about uneasily.

Something unpleasant was under way for them. They knew that when they recognized faces often seen in brawls and in prison. All the hard cases of the outfit were there: Brandzeis, troublemaker extraordinary, with a lawyer's tongue and no love for labor; Chaternet, the anarchist; Mafolier, twice in the disciplinary company; even Old Man Magnus, the most notorious drunkard in the regiment. There was a large percentage

of men of French origin. In the Legion, the French and assimilated races never have shone at discipline.

"What's up?"

"No idea. The Old Man has some noncoms in his office. I—"

"Shut your mouth, there! Silence in the ranks!" the senior sergeant, lean as a stork and soft-hearted as a crocodile, barked. "I want to see your mugs closed, see? Abereit, Arkinow—" He called the roll from a paper in his hand, glaring at each man as he answered. Before he reached the last name, the Old Man appeared and strutted across the yard.

Captain Auxon was a tough little guy, not more than five foot six, almost as broad as he was tall. He had a wide, fleshy face in which tiny eyes gleamed like topaz insets. From his jerky walk, from the tilt of his képi over the left ear, the men felt he had something in store for them, that he was about to put over a real good one.

"Inspection. Down packs."

This was very thorough and lasted almost an hour. Auxon even counted the packages of cartridges in the pouches.

"Attention!" the senior sergeant yelled.

Fully equipped once more, the men stiffened, waited, rigid, faces expressionless. They were not the best behaved men in the company, that was true, but they looked like soldiers. The captain nodded his satisfaction, stepped back some distance, to a spot from which he could sweep the double line with a single glance. He did not order them at ease.

His hands were locked behind his back, the riding-crop caught under the left arm. He rocked a little from heels to toes, from toes to heels as he spoke.

"We are old acquaintances. There are forty of you, forty humorous, clever fellows, fond of guzzling, carousing. I remember very well the last occasion when I had you grouped. Do you recall the morning of the Fifteenth of July?"

The men did not move, their faces did not change expression. But one could sense the awareness of those forty soldiers. They recalled, were beginning to understand, and what they understood did not cheer them up.

"The eve of the Fifteenth of July," Auxon resumed after a pause for effect, "naturally was the Fourteenth of July, National Feast Day. This post was honored by the visit of important people: a general of division,a deputy from Paris, a municipal councilor from Casablanca, their friends, their ladies. I had issued strict instructions that there was to be no drinking until after their departure.

"You elected to turn up magnificently stewed at ten-thirty in the morning. I do not lecture for temperance. The Legion is the Legion. But a tradition with us is that any show we give is a good show. I'll never forget that parade. I concede that you achieved some highly comical effects. The chap who pole-vaulted on his bayonetted rifle had an idea, and the impromptu game of leap frog may have been sheer genius. And I am ready to grant that the songs you sang were Legion songs, and that the ladies had expressed a wish to learn to know the real Legion. You gave them realism.

"You distinguished yourselves. You earned my undivided attention. The next day, I informed you that our guests had intervened in your favor and begged that no one be punished for the scandal. I also told you that I would never forget you. I can't forget you. I received a letter of appreciation from the colonel commanding the regiment, about your little show. Your fame had spread beyond the hills and to the civilian zone. I have looked up my name on the promotion list. And the extreme humor of your performance strikes me anew.

"I laugh, my friends. I laugh loudly."

Captain Auxon's lips twisted into a wry grimace.

OLD MAN MAGNUS felt shame then. He and those with him had let down the officer badly on that occasion, had ruined the parade, made an exhibition of themselves. And he, Magnus, veteran Legionnaire, had caught their nasty spirit and become one of the worst offenders. He had felt very important and very smart, when he had been called into the officers' mess to drink champagne, as the dean of the privates in the

outfit. He had drained the cup handed him by the general's wife, shaken hands. Then Auxon had given him his cue to be off. Instead, he had drawn a bottle of anisette from the skirt pocket of his *capote* and insisted on "treating." He had known, dimly, that he was embarrassing the crowd, and had enjoyed that in a sullen fashion. He had got away with it, too.

The general had accepted a drink, poured in his champagne cup, had laughed and patted his shoulder, although his chuckle had not been as hearty as could be desired.

"A real Gaul, ladies and gentlemen," he had told the company assembled around the tables. "Military Medal man, as you see. A warrior and a democrat." But the general's eyes had sought for the captain with a certain murderous intensity as he concluded: "Proud as Artaban, brave as a lion!"

"Lion yourself!" Magnus protested. "I'm no beast."

That had caused a laugh. Encouraged, he had asked for another drink of champagne, explaining that he seldom got it. He had lurched around for a while, and the orderlies had told him later that they had had a hard time leading him away, but that he had been very funny.

Funny? He was ashamed. They had been nice people, all of them, and he had annoyed them. He saw now that the general had been very decent, and that he, Magnus, had been a slob. He wished he could tell the captain so, apologize. But now it would look as if he were crawling.

"When I was informed, two or three days ago, that a section from my company was needed to occupy a blockhouse in a charming location, so pleasant a sojourn that even the Negro troops have had a couple of suicides, I worried. Then it occurred to me that I had just the men for that spot. A section composed of ordinary men would become moody, depressed, would call for many things in the way of privileges, food and entertainment. Selected men were needed, resourceful chaps with a keen sense of humor, who could coax a good time anywhere, get a laugh at anything.

"The place is healthful, exposed to fresh air and sunlight. There is no reason why it should produce *cafard*, yet it seems to. But *cafard* has no grip on you. All humorists. I am sure your morale will not suffer. You will be up there through the winter months, six or seven months at most. You won't need outside help to keep cheerful, so the traveling entertainers will skip your post, and, wind and weather permitting, you will receive mail once a month."

No man actually spoke, but a vague murmur of protestation drifted along the lines. They knew what the captain intended to do, exile them, sentence them to monotony. Auxon grinned and his sentences battered away at their confidence like so many clubs.

"An unjustified call for a doctor will lead to court-martial. I want no malingering. And I do not want to be annoyed by disciplinary sanctions. I have selected sergeants capable of maintaining order without referring minor matters to me. No man will be sent back for punishment. In that respect, the blockhouse must be self-sufficient. You understand me? I have further instructed your leader that I wish only one report from your detachment: 'All is well'!

"Now, I am sure I have not overestimated your talents, that you'll go through those months laughing, standing on your heads. Sergeant!"

The lean noncom stepped forward, holding a paper.

"Non-commissioned officers assigned to the Special Section for Khaloua: Sergeant-Chief Larkorska, in command. Sergeant Versini, Sergeant Mettermann!"

This time, there was a definite, audible muttering of protest. The men stirred restlessly. The captain was justified in riding them hard, and had a right to use their section as a dump. But they felt he was going too far in his choice of sergeants.

Larkorska, a Pole, was the best hated noncom in the regiment, who had been up twice on charges of brutality and had escaped conviction and demotion each time only because he had a superb fighting record and was very humble before officers. It was common talk that

despite his fine physique some unclean malady was gnawing at his brain, that he was cracked. Normally, he was morose and cruel, and when in a rage, he was deadly.

Versini was a dapper, youngish Corsican, who wore old-style mustaches, long, thick and black, aped officer's dress and fancied himself a heart-breaker. He was a brave man under fire, but a louse anywhere else.

Mettermann was a type not too rare in the Legion, a German with a good education and too much conceit. He hinted mysteriously at a title and an enormous fortune, was a snob who borrowed money from corporals and privates. He and Versini had a feud that dated back to the company's stay in Meknes, when Mettermann had alienated the affection of some girl they both pursued. They had come to blows several times, and both had been heard to say: "When I get good and ready, I'll use a pistol."

They hated each other, and they hated Larkorska. The Pole, a clean-shaven, blondish man, tall and wide, scorned Versini's swarthiness and mustache. He laughed openly at Mettermann's claims to distinction and noble birth. At Khaloua, the three would live close together, and all the Legionnaires realized that the nervous sergeants would unload their spite on the privates.

They understood, as did the captain, that it would mean that orders would be issued by one, countermanded by another, reissued, maintained, deleted, until a man would disobey one chief in obeying another.

"Silence in the ranks!" the senior-sergeant snapped.

"Well, my friends, pleasant sojourn and lots of luck," the captain concluded. He turned over command to Larkorska in a few words, shook hands with no one. He walked back toward his office, as the Pole stepped forward.

HE SWEPT the men with a glance, and a thin smile played on his face briefly. He knew they hated him, and he detested them. More than the other Legionnaires, they had bucked his authority. And now, he had them, bound hand and foot by the captain's orders, his to handle as he pleased.

"Detachment, at ease! Every thirteenth man's acting corporal." For there were no corporals, as they were punished men and the first step in punishment is demotion to the ranks. "Other nominations will be made in due time." Larkorska's voice was loud and clear, and he looked fine standing there, unperturbed. "Detachment, attention! Right shoulder—arms! By groups, forward, march!"

The detachment obeyed, marched, swung left and headed toward the gate. No bugles, no drums to play them out. They were allowed to go like a gang of tramps. As they passed under the gateway, there was a short struggle, oaths, confusion, then a resounding detonation. A man was down.

It was Legionnaire Portic. He was a sort of a useless fellow, who had trouble with his knees and had applied for medical board, hoped to be sent down to Meknes for examination and discharge. The prospect of a winter in the hills under Larkorska, who detested him especially, had been too much to face. He had drawn his bayonet, used it to operate the trigger of his rifle. Those near him had noticed too late. The bullet had torn through his jaws and the blast had knocked off his képi. His own brother wouldn't have recognized him.

The detachment came to a stop automatically. Men crowded near, looked down, with pale, twitching faces. Larkorska pushed his way among them, jostling mightily. "I've given no order to halt. Keep going, keep going!"

"But, Sergeant—Portic's bumped himself. He's dead!"

"I can see that," Larkorska shoved the speaker about. "Get going."

"Don't we pick him up?"

"No. He fell *inside* the post."

The big Polack was perfectly calm, unnaturally calm. But he got his detachment to move on rapidly. The men walked as if their legs were weary already. It did not seem right to leave a comrade lying there, dead, unattended, like a dog.

Old Man Magnus, first man of the

first group, saw Versini trot up, his mustache sooty because of his waxen pallor. "Say, listen, Larkorska, what about the report? A suicide—a report of the exact circumstances must be made out, you know!"

Larkorska kept walking, eyes straight ahead.

"Call me 'Sergeant-Chief' when you address me, Sergeant. You heard the captain's orders. All he wants to hear from this detachment is 'All is well'. He said that, both in the private talk in his office and before the men in the yard. I'm obeying orders. Get back where you belong, Sergeant."

"What about our baggage—Sergeant-Chief?"

"Coming by truck tomorrow, with the hill-convoy. Get back."

Versini dropped back as ordered. Behind, there was a growing rumor, shouts. They were picking up Portic, back there. The captain must have arrived, and he must be a bit white about the gills! Maybe that would give him an idea of what was coming. Maybe! A suicide as they left!

"Eyes front," Larkorska called over his shoulder. "*Pas cadencé*—one, two—one, two!"

Suddenly, as one man, the Legionnaires understood his intention, and for once approved him. The captain was being tough. Very well, they could be tough. They would leave him that corpse with the shattered skull casually, like a farewell card! There had not been ten seconds' delay in the detachment's progress over the incident.

They half-expected to see Auxon arriving on horseback, issuing orders to turn about. But minutes passed, there was no sound from behind. The thirty-nine, recently forty, continued.

A deep voice lifted suddenly, and as they recognized the song, the Legionnaires joined in.

"Quand on est mort,
On est f . . tu,
On est f . . tu dans une bière. . . .
Les asticots vous bouffent le. . . ."
"When one is dead,
One is stuck. . .
One is stuck in a coffin. . . .
The maggots eat up your . . . ."

Let the Old Man hear that and know they could take it. The tune was mournful, a dirge, and slowed down their steps a bit.

Larkorska allowed them to sing for a few minutes, then turned again:

"Shut up!"

And the monotony of the march gripped them, wiped out their farewell to Legionnaire Portic, candidate for discharge, suicide, "exact origin unknown—"

CHAPTER II

CRACKPOT PALACE

KHALOUA was isolated, but there seemed no reason for fear. Yet the detachment of Senegalese *Tirailleurs* the Legionnaires replaced were not the normal, grinning blacks they knew, but grayish, furtive, dispirited. Their white chiefs looked like tramps, unshaved, haggard. They rushed through the routine of transfer, and rushed away as if Satan was after them.

And five minutes after their departure, gloom settled on the new arrivals, deep, unexplainable gloom. An all-pervading depression that seeped into the brain, flooded the body with an almost physical discomfort. Larkorska, perhaps because of his mental condition, alone seemed free of it.

"I want this dump cleaned and turned out Legion style inside a fortnight," he addressed the men. "And I'm going to keep up the morale. I want no sloppiness, no guys hanging around in their shirts. Off-duty and in the open, I want you turned out as if you were in Casablanca. Képis and *capotes*.

"You heard what the captain said. He wants no kicks, no complaints. I'm big enough to handle this without sticking men in jail. The first guy who cracks wise or makes a wrong move gets his teeth knocked down his throat. Starting this minute. Any candidate to test whether I mean business or not?"

No one stepped forward. The challenge was against regulations. But this was not an ordinary section, subject to rules. Even its composition was not

regular. They knew what Larkorska counted on—he was covered by the captain's orders. This was his idea of heaven, a free hand and a chance to torment men.

There was plenty of work to be done. The blockhouse offered a discouraging spectacle. The Negroes had allowed the walls to crumble in spots; the shacks and sheds were so many hog-pens. The machine-guns on the jutting angles were practically useless, coughed and gagged after a dozen shots.

Larkorska drove them like a maniac. The beaten-earth floor of the dormitory was covered with planking, a hard job with available material so scarce. The kitchen floor was cemented. The walls were repaired, the barbed wire stripped and replaced with glittering strands from a storage shack. Labor gangs went out to gather firewood for the winter, to lift big stones from the hillside, stones which had to be shaped for use. Inside walls were white-washed, the latrines cleaned out. Larkorska ordered all wood surfaces scrubbed, polished and kept polished.

The food was poor. Like other outposts in the Atlas, Khaloua had a few heads of cattle and sheep herded between the walls and the wire enclosure. But there was not much grass, and although the animals were presumed to represent a large supply of fresh meat, actually they were bone and sinew. The sheep, when slaughtered and skinned, resembled hares.

Larkorska had signed the inventory without sufficient investigation. Coffee, sugar, canned meat, had to be rationed carefully from the start. The tobacco was running low very soon, and the wine had been watered beyond all reason. The lard was rancid, the bacon wormy. But the hated staples were there in profusion, sacks and sacks, beans, lentils, chick-peas, rice. There were eight cases of vinegar, but very little oil and not a single case of bottled wine.

IT WAS Mafolier, the Parisian, who named the place *Cinglé Palace*, which meant, in the adopted use of the English word *palace* in French, Crackpot Hotel. And it was Mafolier, through his wise remarks, who first was called into a shed by Sergeant-Chief Larkorska.

In theory, a Legionnaire struck by a superior in private has the right to strike back without fear of punishment. But the advantage of the superior is immense, because he knows in advance when he is going to hit. Standing at attention, the private must concede the first blow. And the Pole had perfected a first blow, a right hand drive to the belly, between navel and crotch, that took the fight out of an opponent. He was mean and cruel, but careful. He administered his beatings systematically, bruising the body but leaving the face unmarked.

Mafolier dragged about for two days, retching blood. Another man was treated the same way, a third, a fourth. Talk of shooting the sergeant started very soon.

But an outpost is a crowded place. There would be witnesses, and men have to be desperate to risk the firing-squad or twenty years at hard labor. Court-martials, composed of officers, naturally dislike to admit that summary execution can be excusable.

Meanwhile, Versini and Mettermann were providing entertainment. For whoever won, a sergeant got licked. Their plight was pathetic.

Twice a day, they sat down to the same table. At night, their cots were four feet apart, and the one who came off duty took care to make enough noise to awaken the others. The orderlies reported that they had exchanged punches and insults several times. And Larkorska, in addition to killing them with work like the rest of the garrison, prodded them constantly.

"Well, Versini, I thought a Corsican never forgave an injury. Now, tell me about that dame? She liked fair-skinned guys, eh? Eh, Mettermann, the Teuton superman is a bit timid, what? Letting a swarthy Mediterranean native scare you. Long on *Kultur*, short on muscles, is that it?"

When the work was easier, the sergeant-chief ordered drill, from seven to ten, and again from three to five. Nevertheless, he was finding it hard to get

a victim a day for his exercise in the shack, for the Legionnaires had become experts at avoiding trouble. Probably his taste for brutality had grown stronger as he indulged it. He started to issue arbitrary orders.

"The Sergeant-Chief in command of Khaloua Blockhouse reminds the Legionnaires of the garrison that they are living in a military establishment and not attending a country fair. The noise made by harmonicas, tissue paper across combs, biscuit-tin fiddles and other so called musical instruments is disturbing to those who desire rest. There will be no more singing, playing or whistling within the limits of this post at any time of the day or night without special permission from the sergeant-chief commanding and at times decided upon in advance. (Signed) Larkorska."

This brought consternation. The men liked to gather after twilight, to sing sentimental ballads and marching songs, to play on their home-manufactured instruments. The Pole was corking their only spiritual outlet.

"He's nuts," someone yelled.

"You're telling us! But what's anybody going to do about it? Same old story. He'll ride us like slaves for five months, pat us on the head for the last few weeks, make up to us, and we'll all be so glad to get away from this dump that no one will put in charges. And if anyone has the guts to do it, I bet he finds he has no witnesses. Nobody'll have seen a thing."

"Somebody should croak him."

"Line forms on the right. Candidates for the firing-squad wanted. Don't make us laugh!"

Larkorska, approached for permission to play, refused it, saying that he enjoyed the silence. After eight o'clock, the blockhouse was as silent as the grave. The Pole prowled about, ear cocked for the strain of music, seeking a victim, like a cat in a cheese cellar.

AT two-thirty one morning, as Larkorska was making the rounds—for the man did his job thoroughly, all admitted—a flame stabbed the darkness, a detonation brought everyone out. The bullet had missed the sergeant, slapped into a wall. The rifle report was followed by that of a revolver. The sergeant had drawn his service weapon, fired—and put a slug through the shoulder of a sentry.

As the man was being bandaged by the light of a lantern, he protested that he was innocent, offered his rifle for inspection. Several men sniffed at the muzzle and agreed that there was no smell of powder. The barrel and the breech were clean. Larkorska smiled pityingly as he waved away the weapon.

"You don't get the idea, mugs," he declared. "See, a guy who takes a shot at me had better hit me. Otherwise, each and every time, I'll shoot at the nearest guy. And I don't miss. If you all get that through your heads, maybe I won't be bothered."

The idea was simple but effective. Only a madman would have been so unjust, so ruthless, but the Pole was a madman.

"You'll radio for the doctor to come up, eh, Sergeant?"

"The hell I will." Larkorska grinned. "It's a flesh wound, and the captain doesn't want us to call for the doctor over trifles." He lighted a cigarette, smiled again. "But that gives me an idea. Next time, I'll aim for the belly, and I won't send for a doctor. Somebody will have a lovely time. A belly wound, and no doctor! Remember that."

The system practically guaranteed safety. The men doing sentry duty on the walls, outlined against the sky, made fine targets. And they did not care to have a comrade endanger their health by sniping at the sergeant. Men constantly watched the rifle-racks, and the men on watch became so cautious that they looked as much inside the enclosure as outside, challenged and threatened to shoot at the least movement. Men who had to go to the shacks near the southern wall in the dark took to carrying lanterns, to evidence their honest intentions.

MAGNUS took his place in the group scheduled to drill under Mettermann, still amazed by his sudden clarity of thought. It was as if an old personality, long forgotten, was rising again. He did not wholly like the sensation, for there were incidents in his life that he had wished to wipe out. A long time ago, in the days when he had drunk to dull his brain and not because he craved drunkenness for its sake.

His sense of shame persisted, that he was one of thirty-nine men cowed by a mad bully. As his nerves steadied, his feeling of dignity, of manhood, increased.

He did not blame the others so much. They were soldiers. Legionnaires, professional soldiers, but not French Army men.

It was a fine distinction, difficult for him to explain. He felt it, that was all.

What he had been could not tolerate what he had become. He was a good Legionnaire, had the Military Medal and the two crosses, the green and red ribbon of the War, the red and blue of the Colonies. But he had been trained to feel responsibility for others, and that training, which he had drowned for years, now asserted itself.

He obeyed instructions mechanically, moved his rifle with extreme precision. He could have gone through drill in his sleep. He could think and obey at the same time. Mettermann was a good sergeant, regardless of private faults. He could pace a drill so that it was not too monotonous. There is a difference even in that simple routine.

"Lunge—recover—lunge—recover—at ease. You, Schweiss, how long in the Legion?"

"Four years and two months, Sergeant."

"Oh well, can't be expected to know much, can you? Stiff knees? No? Old Man Magnus will show you. Go ahead, Magnus. See? The idea is to drop as well as stab, get yourself out of the way."

The light was growing dimmer. Magnus, breathing hard from his demonstration, looked up at the sky. It was low and grayish, a uniform tint from horizon to horizon. And, suddenly, white flakes appeared. The first snow!

For several weeks now the crests of the distant Grand Atlas had been edged with white. And the lower mountains would soon be covered. Everywhere else that Magnus had been, the first snow of winter had been greeted with glad shouts. Men remembered their childhood, the games they had played. But here, faces grew set, grim.

They would be snowed in, separated from the world even more completely. Some of the trail up was not passable for carts in winter. They had known all along that they would receive no more supplies, but they had kept hoping. Now, hope was gone. They would be on scanty rations for months. Even the temporary relaxation of a long patrol would be lost. Patrols could not travel very far in the drifts.

Mettermann stopped issuing orders, looked down at the first flakes melting on the ground.

"All right. Dismissed," he said.

But they had scarcely broken ranks when Larkorska appeared, from nowhere. "Sergeant, what time is it?"

"Nine-fifteen, Sergeant-Chief."

"My orders are to drill until ten. Two days confinement to quarters, Sergeant. I'll take charge now."

Mettermann saluted, and started to leave.

"Just a moment. I did not dismiss you, Sergeant. Double to your quarters and return here with your weapons."

Mettermann flushed, but obeyed. He did not have far to go and was back within two minutes. He took his place at the right of the group. Larkorska started giving orders, very slowly, leaving the men in uncomfortable positions for long seconds.

"Lunge—hold it." And the Pole would stroll between the men, jerking up an elbow here, adjusting a rifle there. Muscles ached, tempers grew short. "What's the matter, Sergeant?" he asked Mettermann. "You should keep that glare for Versini. Maybe you're afraid of him?"

Mettermann straightened, grounded arms and laughed shortly.

"I protest that, Sergeant-Chief. My private affairs have nothing to do with duty. I cannot tolerate such insinuations before the men. Do you imply I am a coward?"

"What else?"

Mettermann had a bayonetted rifle in his hands. For a moment, the men held their breath as the junior sergeant moved nervously.

Larkorska remained rooted to the spot, but he was alert and smiling. He knew that the German's gun was not loaded, and his own revolver was ready. All he had to do was drop his hand from belt to the holster.

"I hope you will answer for that, Sergeant-Chief."

"In due time, Mettermann. Avenge offenses in proper order. Before quarreling with me, settle with Versini. You reproach me for speaking before the men. I am doing this purposely. There have been blusters and threats for months, and you have become the laughing-stock of the company. You are unworthy of your chevrons, dishonor your uniform."

Mettermann's chin quivered. He was speechless with furious humiliation. Larkorska enjoyed that, for it was inflicting keener suffering than he could deal out with his fists. Brusquely, unexpectedly, he lost control, spoke words that ripped and slashed.

His face had turned white as lard, dewed with greasy sweat. There was foam on his lips, his eyes protruded. He no longer saw, no longer heard, simply swayed there, spitting out oaths and insults, agitated by some obscure rage boiling in his sick brain. Mettermann could have run him through without much risk now, for it was doubtful that the Pole could have ceased talking to save his life.

The tirade continued for three endless minutes. Then the voice dragged, the words were widely spaced, as if Larkorska was speaking with an effort. He appeared weakened, dazed.

He stopped short, pressed one hand over his eyes.

"All right. Dismissed."

Mettermann walked towards his quarters and Magnus, urged by that new, odd sense of responsibility, trailed him. There was time. Versini was outside the blockhouse, in charge of a wood-cutting gang somewhere down the hill.

"Sergeant, I don't want to butt into something that's none of my business," the veteran offered quietly, "but I wouldn't do anything foolish."

The German laughed, a ghastly, tense laugh.

"No, no, Legionnaire. The sergeant-chief was absolutely right. Before settling with him, I have to settle with the other. I have made myself ridiculous."

MAGNUS would have argued longer, because Mettermann had accepted his company without hesitation. But the bugle sounded for soup, and he instinctively turned and doubled across the yard. He stopped at the kitchen, got his mess tin filled with mutton stew, received his ration of bread and wine. His comrades were already finishing their meal in the barracks. And the "great tobacco-fair" had started, the borrowing of cigarette butts.

The chief topic of conversation, of course, was the terrific bawling out inflicted upon Mettermann in public. Most men believed that would bring things to a head. But there were skeptics.

"Three francs that Mettermann does nothing!"

"Taken," a German snapped.

"And six that if he does, Versini pops him off. That little Corsico can shoot, he can."

"Taken."

"Thought Larkorska would throw a fit—"

"What d'you call what he did?"

"I mean keel over, roll on the ground and bite his tongue. He's got them bad. Won't it be lovely to be snowed in with him? I've seen them go before, with galloping *cafard*."

That caused a long discussion of insanity. In any gathering of Legionnaires, two thirds of the men will be experts, self-styled, on that subject. And there are very few places in the world where men are readier to back their knowledge with their fists. The shack was filled with clamor, noisy as an asylum.

Outside, the snow was falling, slowly, persistently, and there was a carpet an inch thick, pure and white, spread over the yard. The reddish tin roofs of the buildings were covered, and through the open doorway, the scene assumed a weird Polar aspect.

"Wonder if we can get a Christmas tree," Kline, the red-cheeked young German mused aloud.

"Sure, and we'll get the sergeant to trim it for you!"

"Cases of it, cognac and champagne—" Nikirov had isolated a victim in a corner. "See, the Moroccans attacked us, and the Greek thought he'd be killed if he stayed, and he couldn't get his cart away so—" His voice trailed on and on. "Cases, cognac, cognac!"

Then, around two o'clock, there was a rumor of voices outside, and they all ceased talking. That must be Versini and his gang, returning. They crowded to the door, to the windows, which were opened despite the cold.

They saw one of the acting-corporals speaking to the Corsican, while the returning men led the post's two mules, loaded high with wood, to the shed on the right of the gateway.

The sergeant nodded, and they saw him throw his head back, as if laughing. He looked toward the door of the room he occupied with Mettermann. The German was not in sight, but Larkorska had come out of his room and stood leaning against the wall, arms folded across his chest, watching. Magnus noticed that the shallow snow had melted around his feet, which, at the distance, seemed to give him a plate to stand on, like a toy soldier.

Versini lighted a cigarette. Then, after calling out some final instructions to the men who had returned with him, he started across the yard. The sentries on the walls had turned their backs to the outside. Only a few flakes were drifting down now, slowly, slowly.

"Mettermann won't do a thing."

"He's waiting for him inside."

"Ambush him? He wouldn't dare in front of all of us."

"Here he comes—"

The noncom's door had opened, and Mettermann came out. He closed that door very carefully, with his left hand. The right was prolonged by something slim and dark, the barrel of a German automatic. He faced the yard. Versini was walking on.

"Versini!"

The Corsican halted. The trail of his strides was behind him on the snow. His hand dropped, unsnapped the leather catch on his revolver holster. Then it lifted and touched his black mustache gently.

'Et alors?" he called back. "What then?"

"Defend yourself."

"I will, don't fret." Versini then drew his revolver, jerked his hand to throw the cylinder out, looked at it, snapped it back. "Well, what are you waiting for?"

THEY were seventy-five or eighty feet apart. Mettermann lifted the automatic, aimed, fired. He missed and the slug struck the tin of a roof. He fired again

as the Corsican took two steps forward, straightened his arm, body thrown back as if aiming at a target, and pressed the trigger. His nerves were steady, that was sure, because that first shot of his took the képi right off Mettermann's head.

"Shooting too high," a man criticized.

"Hell, no, he did that on purpose. He knows he's got the Dutchman at that range—"

Magnus stared, fascinated. This was impossible—two sergeants fighting with guns in the center of a courtyard, with their chief and their subordinates as spectators. The kind of things that one heard about and never saw. But there it was, there it was—

Events, movements, were coming swiftly, yet Magnus and the others could see every detail clearly, as if the action had been slowed down. Mettermann, stupidly, bent toward his képi, and that probably saved his life. For Versini fired again, twice, in quick succession and hit the door where his adversary's body had been.

Mettermann abandoned the idea of retrieving his headgear, remaining on one knee, firing upward. It was hard to count his shots, they came so close together.

Versini, still erect, aimed down, and there were ripples in the snow, speeding little wisps of smoke. One—two—He had only one cartridge left, and several voices around Magnus announced the fact.

He was calm, and knew it also, because he steadied his wrist with the left hand for that last shot.

He fired, and Mettermann was still there! Alive and firing back. Once, twice, three times . . . then, although he still held the gun up, there was no flash, no report. The magazine was empty. He reached in his pocket.

Versini was reloading, too, and running as he did, running to one side, as if he meant to take shelter in the doorway of the bakery. From the barracks, the Legionnaires could see his face. He was not afraid. He was laughing, or appeared to be.

"So much for your expert pistol shots," grumbled Mafolier. "Eighteen shots and nothing hit. Say, Mettermann gave himself a break, didn't he? Two shots to one—"

"Well, Versini always said a revolver was better."

Mettermann had reloaded, ran forward, dropped to one knee. Versini was half turned as he trotted, his hands busy with his gun. He had to insert the cartridges one by one, as he did not use the revolver-clip.

A report—and the Corsican faltered, broke stride, jerked two yards more, and sat down. Sat down with his back to Mettermann, who fired again, and again.

"The dog—"

"Well, Versini turned his back."

The Corsican had dropped on his left side now, writhed. He still held the gun. He was hit, badly hit, at least twice. But he had the dauntless energy to roll to his stomach, to aim at Mettermann, who was advancing. They exchanged shots at fifteen feet.

The German staggered jerkily back, recovered, came on.

Versini's face was in the snow, but his legs were moving instinctively, and he propped himself on one hand and both knees, shoulders and head still on the ground, in a grimly ludicrous position, buttocks exposed.

Mettermann now stood over him, pointed the automatic straight down and shattered the fallen man's skull with his remaining cartridges.

At close range, the impacts of the thirty-eight slugs were terrific, and spattered red drops over the snow for three feet.

The spectators saw now that one of Versini's bullets had taken effect, the last of his first load or that single one fired from the second load. Blood was spreading down Mettermann's face, dripping from his chin as he stood looking down at his enemy, whom he had killed at last.

"Lucky for him—self-defense. A court-martial will let him off."

"Versini had threatened him."

"Hit bad, do you think?"

"Naw. A head wound never is if it doesn't drop you."

THE odd angle was provided by the snow. One could follow the brief engagement etched on that white surface, Versini's steps from the gate to the center of the yard, the place where he had halted, the two strides forward, the trampling where he had hesitated, and the widely spaced imprints where he had started to run. Mettermann's tracks came in a straight, rigid line, from the door of the noncoms' quarters to the dead man.

Mettermann was looking about uncertainly. His hand kept moving up, wiping the blood out of his eyes. He peered at the men now emerging from cover. Then he seemed to get his bearings, turned in the direction of Larkorska's door. The Pole had remained outside, in plain sight, throughout, never unfolding his arms until Versini had died.

Now he was coming forward, not taking a step faster than another, cool, half-smiling. Mettermann felt his side pocket, then reached inside. The empty magazine clattered down, a fresh one was inserted. There was a click of metal as the junior sergeant snapped the barrel back to insert the first cartridge.

"Is that settled, Sergeant-Chief?" he asked loudly.

"For the present, yes, Sergeant."

"Then defend yourself."

Larkorska showed all his teeth in a cheerful smile. He did not hesitate, kept walking casually.

"Personal matters must be dropped. I arrest you for murder."

"You know it wasn't—"

"A court-martial will decide that, Sergeant. Your gun, please."

Mettermann presented his pistol, but muzzle first and with the butt tight in his palm. "Come on, quit kidding. Draw your gun. I'm going to finish this today."

The Pole pushed his body against the gun, the gun that had just killed one man. He kept his hands at his sides, his eyes drilled into those of the younger man. If the nervous chap pressed the trigger, his liver would be torn apart.

"I'm on duty, Sergeant. You're under arrest."

For an instant, Mettermann appeared to be considering surrender. Then he struck Larkorska on the jaw with his left hand, knocking him back three steps. "Get your gun out."

Larkorska was too wise to do that. He felt sure that, as long as his hands were empty, Mettermann would not shoot him. The man had had his chance to do that if it had been in him.

"Seize him," he ordered the men gathered about the group.

It was an order, but that order was not obeyed. They were soldiers, they had been taught discipline. But common sense made them reluctant to pay for their superior's faults. Larkorska had precipitated the killing; it was his business to handle the killer. They knew that in Mettermann's present mental state, a step in his direction would be the last. And they had but to look down at Versini to know what that pistol could do to a man's face.

The Pole, who knew them, did not repeat his order. He passed the tip of his tongue over his lips, swallowed hard. He had to arrest Mettermann or lose prestige.

CHAPTER III

"LAUGH! BUT OBEY!"

WHEN he made up his mind, he acted quickly. He caught Mettermann's gun wrist, clasped him with his free arm, and tried to wrestle the weapon out of his grip. The men knew what would come, and scattered as fast as they could. Larkorska was much heavier and much stronger than Mettermann, but the German was younger and had considerable nervous energy.

The gun went off twice. And the two were still erect, struggling, breast to breast. The Pole was pushing his opponent's gun hand down, instinctively eager to get that muzzle away from his face. The weapon had a long barrel, and Mettermann could not bring it to bear directly against his superior's body.

When that little ring of steel with its black center swung in their direction, the watching men dodged rapidly. One

of the sentries had come down, and stood near with rifle reversed. But he could not seem to make up his mind whose skull he should tap to bring the scene to an end. Possibly, he knew that saving Larkorska would not make him popular among his comrades afterwards.

The gun went off again.

And the men stopped struggling, stood braced against each other, chest to chest, arms locked. Magnus saw blood and gray stuff smeared on both faces, and it was impossible for him to know which one had been killed. For one of the two was dead—a man cannot live with his brain blown to hell.

Then he saw that it was Larkorska who was supporting Mettermann's weight. It was Mettermann who had lost the left side of his head. The big Pole released his hold; the body slithered against him, oozed to the ground.

Well, Magnus thought with relief, it was over.

Larkorska had stepped back, looking down first at one body than at the other. His lips were moving, but they could not discern the words. Then the sergeant's right hand went to his face, came away wet, sticky. He looked at it, reached toward his head, stopped short, and started to quiver.

"I'm shot, I'm shot—"

He thought he had been hit and was afraid to feel his skull and make sure! His eyes ranged wildly from face to face. Then he drew his revolver, fired. The man with the rifle went down. He fired again, again.

"You've murdered me, you've murdered me—"

The Legionnaires scattered, broke into open flight. They did not stop until they had reached cover. By that time, Larkorska had vanished into his quarters, the door was closed. All was still in the yard, but there were four bodies now, those of the sergeants, the nosy sentry who had left his station without permission, and of another private overtaken by one of the Polack's bullets.

There was another casualty, a chap with a hole in his calf. Two other men showed rents in their clothes, where bullets had ripped through. Out of six shots, the sergeant had scored five hits.

FOR some minutes, the men stared out. The snow fall had thickened and the sky seemed to weep great white tears.

"I'm going out," a Legionnaire said. "Maybe one of our boys ain't dead."

"Better be careful," Magnus warned him mildly. "I've seen *this* happen before. The sergeant's dangerous nutty."

The man shrugged, hesitated. Then pride drove him and he stepped outside the shack. He was no sooner in sight than a carbine cracked from the sergeant's little loophole of a window, across the yard, and a copper-nosed slug struck the wall and whined away. He hopped back to safety, grinned foolishly.

"Missed me," he announced.

"He isn't so hot with a long gun."

The carbine was fired again. Larkorska was aiming at a sentry within his field of vision. Fortunately, it was another miss and the men on guard kept away from exposed spots.

But as the sergeant's gun covered the entire courtyard, all normal activities of the blockhouse were suspended. Larkorska's orderly, a countryman of the noncom, twenty years old, who was devoted to him for no good reason, as he was struck oftener than most, went out cautiously and tried to reason with his chief. But he was greeted with a shot and dodged back to safety.

"How many cartridges has he got?" he was asked.

"About two hundred and fifty for the carbine, perhaps one hundred for the revolver. Then there's his big American automatic, and two boxes of bullets, and his shotgun, too. I never counted the boxes of shells for it, but there must be a half-dozen."

Several men laughed.

"Ain't he got a cannon in there, too?"

"Or a machine-gun?"

"That's an idea," Mafolier exclaimed. "What about turning one of the position machine guns on his dump? You could knock holes in the door, riddle the window and get him—"

"Or we could sneak up after dark and heave a grenade in that loophole!"

The suggestions came rapidly. Magnus smiled.

"What's so funny?"

"You're all cockeyed. We can't kill the sergeant."

"Maybe we're supposed to wait until he bumps us off one by one? Not for me."

"We can't kill him," Magnus insisted, "and I'll tell you why."

"Come on, tell us. We'd like to know!"

"Suppose we kill him, who's going to prove we didn't kill the other two? You know, that there was a mutiny and that we croaked the sergeants."

"Why the hell would we have done that?"

"Well, we're bad eggs. The captain said so. We're undergoing unofficial punishment up here, and we have a right to be sore. Nobody took movies of what happened, and our word alone will be no good.

"No damn good. They'll just claim we massacred the sergeants and the guys who stuck by them."

"They could look at his brain and see he'd been crazy," a scientific Legionnaire claimed.

"I don't think you can tell surely by looking at a brain, unless there's a tumor or something like that." Magnus shook his head and smiled bitterly. "Furthermore, do you think they'd send for brain specialists from Paris? And would a military doctor, ranking as major or captain, admit that a sergeant's brain wasn't better than a private's? Dead or alive, a superior is always right."

"And we'd have to pack it in ice," the scientist admitted.

A practical man brought it back to the important point.

"But we can't let him stay there, potting away at us every time we show ourselves, you know."

"No," Magnus conceded. "We've got to get him alive."

"What you going to do, wise guy—set a trap for him?"

"We can wait until he gets thirsty, hungry," Magnus said.

"Eh, kid, has he got anything to eat?"

"Some boxes of biscuits," Larkorska's orderly replied, checking off on his fingers. "A lot of cans of jam, assorted, some goose liver, a big smoked sausage, two kilogs of hard chocolate, a jug of wine, three cases of mineral water from the ambulance's stores, a—"

He was cut short by a chorus of laughter.

"What a guy! He did all right by himself, eh, boys? Starve him out—he'll starve us!"

"If we had some of that tear gas the cops use!"

"Maybe we could smoke him out with a smoke-candle?"

"Sure, and just ask him to let us toss it in, you dope!" Mafolier started to grumble.

"I still think we should turn loose with a machine-gun. There are forty of us—"

"Thirty-seven," said a voice.

"Right, thirty-seven. What could they do?"

"What could they do?" Magnus shrugged. "There are four dead—no, five—so, to make it good, they'd have to shoot ten. They'd look up our records, find the ten guys with the worst ones, and call them ring-leaders. About fifteen more, still from the records, would get eight to ten years hard labor, as most active participants. About eight more would get three to five years. Some of the young guys would be let off with a year. And they'd pick two, innocent-looking, and let them off completely, to make it look like they'd been very fussy about how they judged us, saying they were just kids, carried away by the bad example of their elders."

MAGNUS watched his listeners as this statement sank in. They knew he was right, that his prediction was based on long experience.

The court-martials, even now that they included a civilian judge, were very hard when sergeants were killed. The army could not well declare an open season for noncoms.

He filled his pipe, struck a match, smiled.

"I wouldn't have to worry much. My record shows that I am a good, clean soldier, nothing worse than a drunk. They'd sort of grin when I played up to them, and say, 'Old Magnus was too tight to know what was going on. We'll

Two, three seconds— what did it matter now?

give him a year, suspended.' Not one of those gold-laced boobs on the bench will ever stop to think we had no booze up here."

"Listen," Nikirov broke in, "I can show you where—"

Several men reached for him and hustled him aside. "We know, champagne, cognac, anisette, the Greek! But listen, Nick, there's a time for everything! You tell us your story some other time."

They were growing very sober.

Save for the four men on the walls and the four in the guard room, they were all gathered in the dormitory, twenty-nine strong, twenty-nine brains. Surely, they could think of a way out. Or could they?

The problem was simple. There was a madman, supplied with guns and ammunition, with water and food, locked in a small room, and they must capture him alive, unhurt. The more they thought of it, the worse they felt.

"What will we do with him once we get him?" someone wondered.

"Use the mule-chains on him, feed him," Magnus replied.

"That makes me think," Beuret said, "that I forgot to water the mules when I came in. All that shooting, you know. I've got to go."

"They won't die," some skeptic objected.

But Beuret was from Burgundy, where wine and minds are strong. And, very simply, he did something rather heroic. He ran out into the yard and galloped for the stables. Larkorska was taken by surprise, and started shooting too late. This evidently infuriated him, because he fired a few rounds at the barracks, smashing through the small panes and making the windows very unpopular.

There is no greater strain than being submitted to bullets that cannot be returned. A dozen men held their rifles, with sweating palms, and swore. But cautious glances outside, where the bodies made small mounds against the smooth white surface, discouraged the bolder fellows who had started to shout that they would make an end of the matter, that no so-and-so could frighten them.

"If it comes down thicker tonight," the scientist volunteered, "we can crawl up on him through the storm and the darkness—"

"And get blown to bits when you knock in his door." Magnus shook his head. "He's got a shotgun in there, remember."

"But we can't stay in here!"

"Why not?" Magnus was logical. "You were always wishing to be in here, loafing, when you had to work or drill afternoons. Now, you're sore because you can't loaf outside with your hands in your pockets."

"But we'll have to get our chow."

"In good time. It's not even near five. We'll knock a hole in the backwall, if necessary, and get to the kitchen that way."

"Suppose the Chleuhs attack us?"

"Why? Most of them have gone south to the plains with the cattle and sheep, and those left know there's nothing for them up here except pneumonia." Magnus shrugged. "And they can hear the shooting, but they can't see us. So they think we're pretty wide-awake and doing target practice. Wish they'd come. We'd get ourselves two or three, and blame the stiffs on them. Then we'd get decorated."

"You're so smart, you old sot, that it's a wonder you—"

Magnus had come to a decision many minutes before. And he had been seeking the proper, most impressive way to announce it.

The man he faced was not more than thirty, a muscular, resolute soldier, despite his fancy for facts and figures. He looked at the regimental drunkard with astonishment as Magnus rose and stepped forward.

"What did you say, Legionnaire?"

"Me?" there was a smile of friendly contempt. "Listen, old man, I don't want to offend you. Just a way of talking—"

"I forbid you to repeat it, Legionnaire."

"Legionnaire? Who made you an officer?" The scientist took the room to witness. "Look at the old guy, will you? Looking for trouble. Damn old wreck—"

Magnus struck him with the edge of his hand on the side of the neck, a painful blow when properly delivered. Then he closed his fists, and struck twice more, once with his right, once with his left. The left smacked over an eye, the right smashed upward against the chin. Under another name, Magnus had done as well in the years just preceding the War, as monitor at Joinville School. The current breed of Legionnaires had somehow forgotten that he had been tested before they had enlisted.

"As the oldest Legionnaire here," Magnus said, "I am taking charge." The man was picking himself up, red with humiliation. The older soldier was not at all sure that he could repeat without the element of surprise. He took something heavy out of his pocket. "I took this off Mettermann. I can use it instead of chevrons."

It was the German's automatic. They all knew that there were several cartridges left. Somehow, they were not ready to launch another series of tragedies. Magnus looked determined, ready to shoot. They drew back.

"Everybody's doing it," Mafolier said,

philosophically. "Now, Magnus's cracked! All right, General—" He came to attention, sketching a mock salute. "The Legion is at your feet."

"Laugh," Magnus snapped. "Laugh! But obey."

"A poor paraphrase from the classics," the anarchist declared. "But that pistol does appear most intelligent. So far as I am concerned, you're in charge."

"All right?" Magnus looked at the men before him. He had backed against the wall, and he waited for a protest. None came. He slid the pistol in his pocket, out of sight, took up his pipe.

"We'll have the sergeant fixed up by midnight," he outlined, when he saw that no one was ready to defy him. "I believe I have a method. Three men will make an exit through the rear wall. Telegraphist!" the radio man edged forward, waited. "At six-fifteen, precisely, send the usual message: 'All is well.' Not one word more. Khaloua Blockhouse will handle its own trouble."

"ABOUT another foot, Chief," said the Legionnaire who had *just measured the crowbar.*

"Good work. Are you ready, Nikirov? You know what to do?"

"Sure."

"Go ahead, there."

The crowbar was shoved into the hole again, and the sledge resumed its rhythmical beat. The impacts were muffled by the wind and whirling snow, but Larkorska, in his room below, must be aware by now of what was planned. Even if he could not hear clearly, he must have felt the vibrations.

The sergeants' quarters, on the eastern face of the enclosure, were backed against the defensive wall. The senior's chamber was almost beneath machine gun platform number four. So that instead of the tin sheets covering other buildings, the room was formed by the cement floor, several inches in thickness. Four men worked by the light of a storm-lantern, relaying themselves with the sledge.

"Think he'll come out, Chief?"

"Yes." Magnus was not too sure. But part of a leader's job is to have a confident tone when he is in doubt.

"It would be a dirty trick if he let himself be choked to death. He's liable to do it, too. He's that mean."

"I don't think he's tumbled that we don't want him to die. He thinks we want to kill him, and he'll come out, if only to try to get a couple more before he goes."

Across the yard, a flame darted, a detonation thumped dully, repeated by a muffled echo. Magnus had posted one of his best marksmen at a window of the dormitory, with orders to keep shooting at intervals, but to miss door and window. It would be too bad to have a chance shot kill off Larkorska.

Below them, the madman was stirring. During the lulls of the wind, they could hear him shrieking. As usual, the shot brought him to action, and he emptied a clip, three cartridges, in the direction of the barracks.

Driving the crowbar straight down would have been comparatively easy. But for a very good reason, it had to be set at a long slant. Five feet of the front of Larkorska's room was covered with light board and tin, through which bullets ripped with ease. And the working gang had had to retreat to a spot beyond the firing angle possible to the man below.

The man wielding the sledge-hammer stepped back, turned the tool over to another. He slapped his mittened hands together, and his teeth showed in the lantern light. "My old woman wrote me, last letter, to be careful not to get sunstroke. Guess she never pictures me in all this snow."

"Africa's hot, and that's all there's to it," another chap declared. "Yet I've never been so cold anywhere else, and I'm from Sweden. They don't make proper arrangements to keep you warm. Now, we've got a stove in the big room, but the sergeant down there has only a charcoal burner to keep himself warm. It's like the natives, going around with bare legs under their cloaks."

"If he'd had a stove," Nikirov said, with his placid common sense, "he would have had a stove-pipe. And we wouldn't need to make a hole."

A silhouette approached along the wall.

"Can I speak to you a moment, Chief?" Legionnaire Schweiss asked.

"Sure. Keep working, there—" Magnus followed the newcomer some distance away. "What's up?"

"Chaternet and Mafolier are cooking up something."

"What?"

"Going over the wall, I think," the private replied. "I'm not sure. They're careful when I am around, and they're talking only to guys they trust."

"All right. I can't leave here now. Just put a guard over the rifle-racks. Nobody to move, no changing of guards, until I give the word. And Schweiss—"

"Yes, Chief."

"Don't hesitate to shoot if necessary. I'll cover you with the captain. If you behave yourself, they'll wipe your slate clean, and there's the making of a sergeant in you. The authorities won't forget those who keep this mess from getting worse."

Schweiss saluted and trotted away.

"She's through, Chief," reported the man at the crowbar when Magnus went back.

"Fine. Get ready, Nikirov," Magnus had prepared a sort of paper charge, with the contents of a smoke-signal. This would be rammed down into the room, set afire. The stuff made a lot of smoke and would force Larkorska into the open. Or force him to commit suicide, an alternative that Magnus did not like to dwell upon.

HE was about to bend toward the hole, when there was a loud explosion, a flash, and the air became alive with screeching metal.

One of the workmen clapped a hand over his leg and swore.

"The dog's fired his shotgun into our hole!"

Magnus thought this over for a few seconds. It was unsafe to fumble about the opening. One might lose a hand. Larkorska's attention must be attracted elsewhere, and the shots from across the courtyard evidently were not sufficient.

"Get me a flatiron and a length of string," he ordered.

This was brought very soon. Magnus gave final instructions, then undertook a really dangerous job. Up to a certain point, his prestige held. But some things he had to do in person. He unbuckled his belt, discarded much of his equipment. Then he lowered himself to the roof, flat on his stomach and crawled forward and outward, from the safety of the platform's cement to the tin roof.

If Larkorska heard a noise, he could fire at the ceiling, tear through with the heavy buckshot, and drive lead, tin shreds and wood slivers, bits of plaster, into the old man's bowels. Despite the sounds of the storm, the squealing of the wind in the barbed wire, Magnus could discern clearly the rasping of his brass buttons on the metal covering.

"I should have taken off my coat," he thought.

But it was too late to draw back. His head reached the edge of the sloping tin, was over the yard. Cautiously he lowered the flatiron at the end of its cord, started to swing it. The job was harder than he had thought; he could get no strength in the blows, and the sounds were slight. He wanted to knock loudly on the wood, to cause Larkorska to think that someone was battering at the door. He thought of the sledge-hammer, but the handle of that was too short to reach from where he rested to the door. Magnus swung the flatiron from left to right to gather momentum, then contrived to strike the panel.

The response was instantaneous. Detonations thudded below, and the sound of rending timber mingled with them. At the same time, the marksman across the yard felt impelled to demonstrate. Several shots hit the wall, a few inches from Magnus' head, ricochetted about his ears. The fellow was firing high, according to orders, to miss both door and window! Magnus had not thought of warning him that he would be over the tin roof.

"I'll get popped off like a rabbit," he thought.

But it would be worse to shout, or to scramble back. Larkorska was apt to fire upward at the slightest sound. Magnus contrived two or three louder knocks with the swinging weight. He heard the impact of metal on metal, knew that

the iron had struck the lock. That was good. The sergeant would think those outside were breaking in with a lever.

He turned his head toward the group on the platform behind him. One of the men had a lighter blazing, and was cursing because the stuff would not catch. Perhaps it was damp. And, below, the maniac was shooting through the door, answered, punctually, by the marksman across the way.

"I should have kept my mouth shut," Magnus mused bitterly. "I have less sense when I'm sober than when I'm soused! Who the hell asked me to do this?"

"Got it!" a jubilant exclamation fused behind him.

"It's blowing back—"

"I'll fix that. Hand me the bellows—"

Magnus had learned the trick, and the flatiron pounded the door. It was important to keep Larkorska busy, away from the hole in his roof. Was the smoke working?

It must be, for the Pole was howling, down below. Howling in an inhuman, stentorian voice, filled with terror and fury. The sergeant was insane, but not enough to scorn death. This was the crisis—would he turn a gun on himself, or come out? The smoke that was leaking into his room was not especially poisonous, but it would lead to asphyxiation in a closed space.

Was Nikirov ready? The Bulgarian, believed to be the strongest man in the garrison, had declared himself willing to leap down upon the sergeant when he emerged. One of the Legionnaires across the way was to announce the opening of the door with the winking of a flashlight.

MINUTES dragged. That room must be filled with smoke. Magnus could smell it, he was uncomfortable. The noncom had not fired for long seconds. Was he unconscious, stretched out on the floor, dying? Magnus hauled himself on his elbows, until his chest and shoulders were over the edge, and he clung with his boot-toes to the strips of metal tape binding the sheets of tin. The snow drove into his face, half-blinded him.

And the fool on the other side took this time to fire two shots. He was a crack rifleman, all right and hit neatly between the top of the door and the overhang of the tin. And nearly scared Magnus out of his wits, brought an exclamation of dismay to his lips, a terse, inelegant French word.

That brought an unexpected result. Magnus was blinded by a flash, deafened by the thud of a heavy detonation not three feet from him. In the flash, he distinguished a tall, whitish silhouette. It was Larkorska, outside!

Magnus pushed himself back, swung about and scrambled to the platform. "Everybody down—he's loose in the yard!"

Larkorska was wandering about, in the snowy darkness. And now that it could not be prevented, it was easy to see how it had happened. The watcher across the yard had been sure that he would discern a dark silhouette against the whiteness of the walls. But all had reasoned like sane men, and Larkorska was mad.

The explanation of the mystery was that the sergeant had stripped completely, and was dodging through the snow stark naked! Magnus' shout had been heard and understood. The few lights showing inside the blockhouse went out. Magnus could imagine doors being closed, blocked.

Well, they had flushed the game out, but it was rather like having a tiger turned loose. And no one could tell how many guns Larkorska had taken along, how many cartridges he had. No one could foresee what building he would approach.

"Why didn't you call me, Chief?" Nikirov protested. "I was ready. It isn't my fault."

"Who's blaming you, you boob?"

"How we catch him now, how?"

"Try a pinch of salt," volunteered a disgusted voice. "I'm getting sick of pampering that guy, and I don't care who knows it. If he comes this way, I'll bump him off and to hell with a court-martial."

"We may have to," Magnus agreed.

"No," Nikirov said. He moved forward.

"Eh, hold it. Where are you going?"

There was no answer. The Bulgarian had vanished.

"The big boob's gone down after him," a Legionnaire said in an awed voice. "He's got guts."

There were two men prowling about the yard now, invisible, soft-footed. One was armed and the other was not. Nikirov had stripped himself to his sweater, so as to be freer in his movements. That offered another charming possibility, that someone down below, in a building, unaware that the Bulgarian was in the yard, would shoot him by mistake.

"Your idea sort of miscarried, Chief."

"So far," Magnus agreed.

He would have slid down into the courtyard himself, as was perhaps his duty. But then Nikirov might pounce on him, thinking he was the sergeant—and it was a hard choice to make, whether one would be better off in the hands of the maniac or in those of the valiant Balkan.

On the left, near the gateway, a gun flashed twice, and the explosions were followed by the crackling of breaking glass. Then there was silence, a long silence.

Magnus thought he understood. Larkorska had fired into the guardroom, on the chance of hitting someone. And Nikirov, tipped off by the flashes, must be on his trail.

Suddenly, the Polack's wolflike scream rose. There was a single shot. Then the sounds of a struggle, although only Larkorska's voice could be heard.

"You got him, Nick?"

"Sure—sure—" The reply was somewhat breathless, and very soon, Nikorov shouted again, "Don't do that, Sergeant, don't you—"

MAGNUS ran along the wall and down the steps, followed by the others, one carrying the lantern. From everywhere, Legionnaires were pouring into the yard, some with lanterns, others carrying flashlights.

Close to the bakery, almost on the spot where Versini had dropped, not ten hours before, they stopped uncertainly. Nikirov had grasped both of the sergeant's wrists. Their arms were locked. Larkorska had dropped the pistol, but another hung in a holster strapped around his naked loins. Under ordinary conditions, the Bulgarian would have been by far the stronger, but the other had a madman's strength.

It was awing to see Nikirov, who weighed over two hundred pounds, lifted bodily, held at arms length, dropped, picked up again, never releasing his grip on the other's wrists. Nikirov's cheeks and chin were bleeding where the maniac had bitten him.

"Leave us alone—I'll take him," Nikirov panted.

His pride was strong, and he did not wish it said that he had been unable to overcome an opponent alone. He kept trying to trip Larkorska, and they would stagger sideways for several feet, recover.

"Get the chains," Magnus ordered.

"Here they are, Sergeant," Beuret held them up.

"What are you waiting for? Get in there!"

Several men rushed forward, shamed into action. Nikirov protested a bit, but none too sincerely. Larkorska appeared tireless. A loop of chain was tightened around his body, circling his arms at the elbows. A Legionnaire took a half-nelson on him to keep him from biting again. Another contrived to fasten a chain around one ankle, twisted it to catch the other. The Pole fell down, with four men on top of him. It was over then in fifteen seconds. He was helpless, padlocked.

"Be quiet, Sergeant," Magnus advised. "Nobody'll hurt you."

But Larkorska squirmed on the ground. His blood-stained chin, his teeth, his rolling eyes, were sickening to behold. Perlynck, whom he had beaten several times, could not restrain himself. Perhaps he was also paying off on his hours of funk. He stepped forward and kicked at the fallen man's ribs.

Before Magnus said anything, Nikirov knocked him flat with a backhand smash across the face. "Dirty! He is strong man, that fellow."

"Let's get him where it's warm," Magnus said. "He'll catch pneumonia other-

wise. If he croaked now, wouldn't we feel like damn fools!"

They lifted the sergeant and carried him to the dormitory. There he was rubbed with snow, then with a rough towel. The ambulance man unlocked the trunk of supplies, made a potion with medicated brandy. Larkorska started to babble in his own tongue, and his orderly replied, soothingly.

"What does he say?"

"Says he knows he's been bad and asks if we please won't hurt him. I know you told him we wouldn't, Chief. But he doesn't seem to understand French anymore. He talks just like a baby, you know, like a baby asking his mother—"

Mafolier sneered.

"Cut it. You'll have us crying!"

CHAPTER IV

SHOWDOWN

AT six-fifteen the following afternoon, Magnus ordered the usual message sent: "All is well."

It was automatic to obey orders, but the old soldier wondered whether it was not one of the times when a 'judicious and proper show of initiative' would be called for. All was far from well. To start with, his prestige was shaky.

He had his past to blame for that. The men could not be expected, overnight, to see a chief in a chap they had seen drunk scores of times, a man who had not been above working hard for a drink, for, midway between paydays, any Legionnaire who can obtain a treat can be said to be a good worker. The young had had him pointed out as a dreadful example.

"There's Magnus, a man who must have had a good education. He'd be a lieutenant today if he had behaved himself. No, he felt too big to stay sober. Result: Unless he has his pint of white wine immediately upon arising, he has the shakes."

He had to be careful in his display of his badge of command, the long barreled automatic. If he flourished it needlessly, they would begin to think him dangerous, and take steps to control him. Magnus did not wish to kill anyone, and was not quite sure himself whether he would back his authority with bullets.

Yet he saw no one about to whom he might turn over command. There were a handful of intelligent, educated men, capable of leadership. But they would be bad leaders from a military point of view. Chaternet, for instance, was far above average. He had a gift for talking men into his way of thinking. But he was an anarchist—there was a rumor that he had participated in direct action, bombing—and he had converted Mafolier to his creed. Perhaps he was the more convincing because he spoke seldom. People were seldom aware of him until he wished to be noticed. He had served five years in a military prison, and was one of those who would be chosen to be executed, if anything went wrong.

And something might go wrong. Larkorska had been removed to a cot in the ambulance room, and the pharmacist and his orderly tended to him. The sergeant was in a very bad way. He had a high fever, prated constantly, and was growing weak.

"I don't believe he's caught pneumonia," the ambulance guy explained to Magnus. "I think that fever is the natural course of his kind of insanity. I don't know much about it, and the handbooks don't have much to help me. I seem to remember, though, that after a paroxysm like he's had, they sometime kick off in a couple of days. And what the hell, maybe he has pneumonia. I think you'd be justified in calling a doctor."

"I don't like to do that. It's against orders."

"You'd better, you know." The man nodded several times. "See, when he was knocking around loose, he bumped into a lot of things, then he had that scrap with Nick. If he passes out before a doctor sees him, when they look at his body, they'll be sure he got the stuffing beaten out of him on purpose."

This was all good, logical talk.

Moreover, some of the men were getting out of hand. For instance, he had had to yield on one point. A half dozen of them had asked permission to go down

the hill, into the valley, with the hope of bagging a wild boar if they were lucky. The region was very quiet, but in Morocco, it was when things were most quiet that one should be careful.

At seven-thirty, Magnus emerged from the radio-office, where he had gone to get the news broadcast, and inquired for the hunting-party. Young Schweiss, who had appointed himself his unofficial lieutenant, looked worried.

"There's something wrong, Chief, I'm sure of that. About an hour ago, a guy came up and asked for a mule, and Legionnaire Beuret took one of the animals down the hill."

"Why didn't you tell me?"

"You were in with the sergeant, then you went to the radio. And they sent word not to tell you, that it was a surprise for you."

"Think they found a boar?"

"Maybe." Schweiss' face lightened. "I could eat a roast."

"Who's in that gang again?" Magnus listened as Schweiss listed the names. "Not a real bad case in the lot." He felt relieved. "Not one who'd try to put one over and desert. Four of them are due for discharge when we leave here, while Nikirov wouldn't leave the Legion to earn a million."

AT eight, there was no news, at eight-thirty, no news. Magnus sent up a flare, as a hint, and from some distance came an answering shot. Then the next outpost used the optical, asking whether there was trouble, what the meaning of the unusual activities, of the shots, could be.

"About time for them to get worried!" Magnus said sarcastically. He told the operator. "Tell them all is well. Locating party out for wood."

It was after nine when the hunting party straggled in. They had seven hares and a small boar. Magnus might have congratulated them, but they were the seven most drunken Legionnaires he had seen in almost a year, since that fateful July Fourteenth. And they and the mule were loaded with bottles. Pockets bulged with flasks, bags clinked, and Nikirov had four champagne bottles slung around his neck with string, over and above the average load.

"It's a regular mine, Magnus," one of the men explained. "It's in a well, you know, and there was a lot of sand dumped on top, all under water. It's just as Nick said—see, the Greek died and never went back for the stuff."

Magnus stood among them, laved by a delicious effluvia. He started to tremble. Every cell in his body yearned thirstily for the body of that aroma. There was champagne, and there was cognac—there was everything that Nikirov had promised. The Bulgarian, vindicated, was beaming.

"Come on, fellows. We can have fried rabbit, roast pork, drink—me, Nick, I bring it all back—"

"And don't worry, there's almost as much more down below," another man put in. "We also brought in some cans of peas, asparagus, mushrooms, that Nick showed us in another cache. Officers' stores, you know."

Magnus stiffened himself for an effort. He waved the excited men away, spoke very loudly.

"Lock up all that liquor, if you don't want me to break it up. It will be rationed out."

This was greeted with shouts of resentment. Greedy hands clutched at the bottles, because their disappearance had been threatened.

Magnus hurled the nearest man aside, placed a hand on the butt of the pistol, which he now carried in a holster taken from Mettermann's room, strapped to his side. He knew that it was his duty to regulate the program, to avoid drunkeness.

But even the menace of death could not daunt these men now. Two vigorous arms clasped Magnus around the middle, strong hands held his wrists, the pistol was taken away from him. He was flung to the ground, trampled on. He was glad to crawl out of the melee on all fours. When he picked himself up, his lip was bleeding and his sides ached.

Matters had gone out of his hands completely. And no one paid the least attention to him. When he tried the persuasive method, taking a man aside, the neck of a bottle would be waved

"It's all right," Magnus said. "I have it."

under his nose, and he would feel his bones growing as soft as tallow. But he refrained from drinking, which, in his case, was worthy of a citation for valor.

It was a merry evening, not only the most merry that these Legionnaires had known at Khaloua, but the merriest ever on that hilltop.

There had been a native fortress there, in the dim past before the French occupation. But the banquets had been devoid of proper liquid cheer.

The cooks drank as much as the others, but managed to ply their trade successfully. Late in the evening, Schweiss appeared in Mettermann's room, to which Magnus had retired, like Achilles to his tent, with his hands loaded with good things. To a man who had been eating thin stew for weeks, the dishes tasted of heaven.

Under other conditions, that roast of boar would have been a trifle tough, a bit gamy. But the pancakes, powdered with sugar and flamed in brandy, were beyond criticism.

There was a bottle of cognac, which Magnus refused to touch. But he opened the quart of champagne and drank that with his meal.

SCHWEISS took away the cognac. And Magnus was left alone before his table, chewing, and drinking champagne moodily out of a battered enamelware cup.

In Versini's trunk, he had found a supply of strong Italian cigars, several of which he had cut up for his pipe.

At midnight, Magnus went out, climbed to the top of the wall, and found it absolutely deserted. The guardroom was empty.

But the dormitory blazed with lights. Every lantern in the blockhouse had been put to use. The improvised orchestra, invariably found in any Legion outpost, was pounding out music. The harmonicas were going strong, and the simple accordion was whining away melodiously.

They sang all the Legion's favorite ballads, 'Who first thought of parting', 'Under the blazing Moroccan sun'; they sang 'Ramona' and 'Chiquita', *'Viens Poupoule', La valse à Julot', 'Des Heimat'*, and fierce, yelping Russian and Balkanese chants. A number of them had discarded their pants and bobbed

about in dances. Schweiss performed a creditable yodel.

Magnus paced the wall, sick with his lot. This was what being a chief meant. He did not like it. They were having a good time down there, and his specialty, balancing a rifle on his forehead, butt upward, would have gone over very well.

The wind lifted stronger, colder, and in the darkness, Magnus could see the snow spume rising in clouds. The barbed wire hummed like a harp. Despite his mittens, his fingers were growing numb. Well, the devil with them. If the Moroccans came and slashed their throats in their sleep, it would serve them right. Not a man with sense enough to be on the wall! No one but Magnus, the old sucker.

He had had enough, he decided. He went down the stairs and asked for a bottle of cognac. They could not give him a whole one. The best they could offer was about a pint. The liquor was beginning to run low.

On his way to his room, Magnus passed before the infirmary, decided to look in at the sergeant. The man was alone, grumbling and crying out alternately. He was held securely by his chains, but he had worked out of the blankets.

"Poor slob," Magnus grunted, covering him. "How do you feel, eh?" Larkorska evidently did not recognize him, but, oddly enough, he had identified the bottle at once, and made unmistakable demands. "Oh, you'd like some of this, you hog? All right, all right—"

Magnus poured brandy into a spoon, dripped it between Larkorska's lips. The sergeant looked at him with almost sane eyes.

"You like it, eh? Open her up. Here's more."

And while the orgy continued, Magnus gave the maniac brandy with a spoon, alone with his sense of virtue, in melancholy grandeur.

HABIT is powerful. When Magnus rose the next morning, there were two sentries on the wall, and the guardroom was occupied. However, it had been demonstrated that deep trust in providence is a protection, for the blockhouse had been wide open for hours.

As his uniform had been torn the evening before, Magnus had borrowed fresh clothing from Larkorska's wardrobe. It was not a good fit, too loose in the chest and over the hips, too short at the ankles and wrists.

Nevertheless, Magnus did his best to get a full view of himself in the small shaving mirror, and combed some of his remaining hair across his bald forehead.

As he went out, Schweiss, somewhat sheepish, handed him the automatic. "I found it under a cot this morning."

"How's the sergeant?"

"The pharmacist says he's worse. Says he don't think he'll stick around more than a couple of days. And, say, Sergeant—" The Legionnaire had dropped 'chief' and addressed Magnus according to the chevrons he had assumed—"I've been working for you."

"What do you mean, working for me?" Magnus said wearily.

"Well, I got some of the fellows together, and we agreed to stick by whatever you decide. Nikirov was propositioned by the other side, but he turned them down."

"The other side?"

"Chaternet, Mafolier and a couple of others."

"What do they want?"

"They want to scram. Desert, Sergeant."

"Where to?"

Schweiss' arm swept the south-eastern horizon.

"I'll talk to them when the time comes," Magnus said. "Thanks, Schweiss. I'm glad I can count on a few sane fellows." The veteran went to the gateway, spoke to the acting-corporal. "Don't let anybody out without my permission."

The man smiled and replied, "No, Sergeant."

Magnus made his rounds, stopped to see Larkorska, who did not seem much sicker than before, dropped into the telegraph room. He knew now that when he bucked the Legionnaires on an important matter, they did not obey. He did not even have the prestige of having

refused to drink. They did not know the ultimate destination of the pint of cognac he had asked for. The power of one man over others can often depend on trifles.

"What's going on?" he asked.

"Routine stuff," the operator answered. "And there's a detachment down in the Sahara hooked up with a raiding band. Two killed. General orders about a report on health in the outposts, and a supplies-inventory must be ready by the fifteenth."

Magnus nodded. He was tempted. The solution was so simple. All he had to do was to address a telegram to Captain Auxon, outline the situation. But, if sent by radio, that message would be overheard by all the posts, whether Legion or not. If sent by optical and relayed, it would surely reach divisional headquarters before it did the captain, and cause an official investigation and an unholy mess.

The lieutenant commanding the next post was not too friendly with Auxon, and might not be adverse to causing him trouble. And there would be enough of that at best. Auxon was married and had a couple of kids. Like most bachelors approaching fifty, Magnus had a regular cult for family, home and other sentimental concepts.

No, he couldn't do that. He must let Auxon know as soon as possible, but quietly. A runner from the gateway came to call him. Chaternet and five others wanted to go out.

Magnus found them waiting, fully equipped, carrying rifles.

"What's the idea?"

"We're going," Chaternet said. "I'm just as glad you came along, because I have something to ask you. We'd like one of the mules, and maybe some ammunition and an extra rifle or two. What do you care? You're not responsible."

"Who is?"

"Auxon, I guess," Chaternet said. "But what do you care? The swine sent us up here, and it is all his fault. He knew what Larkorska was, what Mettermann and Versini were. His joke backfired, and it's too bad for him."

Magnus saw Schweiss, Nikirov and a dozen others coming across the yard, armed. The young chap proved smart, and instead of coming straight over, he dispersed his men, sending some of them to the guard-path on the walls. Normally, desertion is considered a matter of personal choice by privates. But circumstances were somewhat unusual.

"The captain is not to blame," Magnus said, "and I'll tell you why. We did him a dirty trick and he was getting even. As for knowing about the sergeants, you know he didn't. All of us knew Larkorska was bad business, a rotter. But the Old Man just thought him a tough sergeant. He didn't know he beat men for the pleasure of it. If you've ever heard Larkorska talking to an officer, you know he played the good-natured, kindly guy with a strong manner. And so far as Auxon could know, Versini and Mettermann were just a couple of clowns. He hoped it would be tough, sure, but he wasn't looking for this."

Several men nodded. No, you couldn't blame an officer much. Especially when, like Auxon, he had never served in the ranks. He knew no more about what really was going on 'down below' than a passenger on a luxury liner. Sergeants and Legionnaires changed their manners when he was around. From his viewpoint, it had been easy to mistake a sadistic brute for a mere martinet.

The privates know all about officers, because of gossip by orderlies. But an officer is bound to shut his ears to gossip and cannot know.

"All right, it isn't Auxon's fault," Chaternet conceded. "But how about the stuff? Surely, it's none of your business what we do—even though you are masquerading as a sergeant. We're determined to go. If you won't give us the stuff, all right. We'll go as we are."

Magnus shook his head.

"No. You can't take rifles and ammunition with you."

"We can't?" Chaternet laughed. "You know we need them to defend ourselves if attacked before we make a contact, and to sort of get in as useful members of the community when we do throw in with the Chleuhs."

"You know what those guns and cartridges will be used for?"

"That's an old argument, Magnus. Sure, one of those guns, one of those cartridges, may kill a Legionnaire, around here or down south. That's a chance we all have taken. I wish I had a franc for every Legionnaire shot with a Lebel rifle." Chaternet changed his approach. "Don't worry—we'll head for the Spanish territory of Ifni, and we'll surrender our weapons to the Spaniards. Do you think we intend to stick in the Sahara longer than we can help? It's Europe we want."

"You can go. But no rifles."

"You know we can't go without them."

THE scene had to end. Magnus really did not intend to allow those men to leave. Why? Because he was not wholly Legionnaire, because something else had survived. Chaternet had slung his rifle, had one hand in a pocket, appeared talkative, relaxed. But was he? And would knocking him down settle anything?

Chaternet grinned as if he had read his mind. He took his hand out of his pocket. With a swift gesture, he tore out the ring-pin. When he released his grip, the mechanism of the grenade he now held would start functioning. The bomb was of the type called 'defensive', and went off in three seconds.

"Thought you might make trouble, Old Man," the anarchist said, "so I came prepared. Let us out or, on my words as a Legionnaire, I'll drop this right here." He imitated Magnus' tone. "You have two minutes."

Magnus grew pale, motioned the Legionnaires on duty away from the massive gateway. Chaternet thought he was yielding and smiled. But the Old Man backed against the iron-sheathed door. As in a nightmare, he found the pistol in his fist again, aimed at a man. There was no escape. That scene of the past, which had broken his mind, pursued him.

A trench—steel-helmeted men ready to go, all save one, his friend. His friend—

He heard his own voice, calm and very clear.

"You throw and I'll fire, Chaternet."

Magnus knew that he was not bluffing, felt that Chaternet was not. The man had foreseen that riflemen might cover him from a distance. So he had made sure that merely shooting him would not end the matter. When his fingers relaxed, from any cause, the grenade would burst.

The old Legionnaire had ceased speaking, ceased thinking. When the grenade was thrown, he would pull the trigger. The explosion would tear him to bits, possibly wound the bomber, who stood but twenty feet away. But Magnus would shoot too, because it was his job to shoot. He had taken charge.

Mafolier and the others were creeping further away, hugging the wall. Chaternet perceived their movement out of the corner of his eye, and smiled scornfully.

"We're the suckers, Magnus!" he said, almost pleading.

But Magnus remained still as a statue. Chaternet was too proud to quit, saw that death was inevitable. He tossed the grenade at Magnus' feet. And as he did so, the man in the sergeant's uniform pressed the trigger. The pistol flamed, jerked against his palm—and Chaternet dropped.

All the Legionnaires had ducked. All except Magnus, who felt he had no time to dodge, and who was weary. Two, three seconds, a year—what did it matter?

Nothing happened. The grenade did not explode.

At last Magnus bent, picked it up, heaved it over the wall. He heard it strike the ground, and there was no explosion. Yet the pin had been pulled out, for there it was, with its ring still around Chaternet's right middle finger.

The guards were returning, grinning foolishly.

"He's settled, Sergeant," Schweiss said, coming closer. "I think I know where he stole his grenades. Versini had them put in a storage shed. The *Tirailleurs* had kept them in the platform coffers for months, and maybe left the lids open sometime when it rained a lot. Anyway, there were an awful lot of duds in the lot. Just the same, you were lucky."

Mafolier was trotting back from the dormitory, where he had gone to put his rifle in the rack. Perhaps he felt relief that the man who had dominated him mentally for so long had died. He knelt at his comrade's side, opened the tunic.

"Through the heart, Magnus," he announced, trying to grin. But tears ran down his cheeks. "First neat finish I've seen in this dump. Portic, Versini, Mettermann, all smashed heads. Guess that breaks the series. Just the same, you better throw that pistol in a well. Bad luck. Can I pick him up and carry him away?"

"Sure," Magnus said. "Sorry, Mafolier."

"He looked for it. And he's just as well off." Mafolier beckoned for a man to lift the feet. "He used to say he liked you, Magnus—that you were like him, a misfit, an intellectual out of place, only, where he'd gone sullen and sour, you'd gone for the booze. And to think it's that good old Magnus who croaked him, and for disobedience, at that! Come on, mug, let's go."

Magnus winced, then walked slowly to his room. There, he changed into his old, torn uniform. The bottom had dropped out of things now. Chaternet's face overlaid another face, that of a friend, also killed by good old Magnus, who then had been young somebody else. A trench, steel-helmeted men ready to surge out under a bombardment, and one trembling man, a man wearing a lieutenant's stripes. What could a captain do?

He could shoot. Then he could get drunk.

He spent the afternoon making out a full report of the affairs at Khaloua, describing the episodes in detail. Just as he had made another report, long ago, a terse report that one, which had been read at the court of inquiry, and which had brought him the praise of a general.

At six-fifteen, he handed the telegraphist his message. It was couched according to instructions, but contained a clue for Auxon. As soon as the captain read it, he—and only he—would know that something was seriously wrong at Khaloua.

"All is well. Signed: Magnus, commanding."

CAPTAIN AUXON reached Khaloua thirty-six hours later, with an escort of eight men. He had motored from Dar-Makhzen as far as the roads were cleared, then plodded through the snow all night.

He visited Larkorska, telegraphed immediately for a surgeon.

Then he shut himself in the sergeant's room, to read Magnus' report. He must have thought the matter over a long time, because it was three hours before he summoned the veteran.

"You did a good job here, Legionnaire."

"Thank you, *mon capitaine.*"

"And you are no doubt aware that you spared us all a nasty scandal. And that I owe you personal thanks. You have them."

A flitting weariness swept his face, then he was himself again. "I underestimated your capacity for trouble. You have added a list of those who should be rewarded: Schweiss, Nikirov, and so on. But there is no mention of yourself. I understand there could not be. But what do you wish?"

"Nothing, Captain."

"That also is the right answer. Nevertheless—"

"I mean it, Captain."

"There is one thing I can do at once: You have acted as sergeant. I maintain you in the rank. Have your chevrons stitched on your sleeves immediately."

"I'd rather not, Captain."

"It's an order." Auxon lighted a cigar. "I cannot cite you for this. That would mean explaining too many things that are best forgotten. But you really have earned the Cross of the Legion of Honor, the Red ribbon. I'm sorry I can't obtain it for you."

"It's all right, Captain." Magnus smiled. "I have it."

He fumbled inside his clothing, brought out a small parcel, unwrapped paper. What he held was the enameled cross, suspended on a faded ribbon of moiré red.

"Kept it as a sort of a pocket-charm, an amulet, Captain."

Auxon rose, and came to attention, saluted. He had no alternative: The

Legion of Honor rates a salute from a man in uniform.

"What year?"

"Seventeen, Captain."

"Hard year, that."

Auxon knew many things from that single, glistening object. The wearing of the Cross is compulsory. Magnus did not wear it, consequently, he had earned it under another name, a different identity. It meant also that Magnus had, in all probability, been an officer. The captain was curious, but he could ask no questions. They were forbidden to him.

"I understand a lot better," Auxon said. He smiled, as one equal to another, extended his hand. "Congratulations on an excellent performance, *Sergeant.*"

"Thank you, Captain."

"You may leave."

Magnus came to attention, saluted. Then he about-faced and marched out of the door. The yard was deep with snow, and he walked between high mounds toward the dormitory. There was nothing hidden under that snow now. Versini, Mettermann and the others had their little wooden crosses, in the tiny cemetery down the hill.

There were very few men about. The routine of patrols and drill had resumed, under the sergeants which Auxon had brought out with him. Magnus addressed one of the men. "Eh, do you happen to have sergeant's chevrons?"

The Legionnaire, who was a tailor, nodded.

"Sure. I'll put them on for you, and give you fresh ribbons for your decorations, too." He struggled a while against generosity, then added, "Free. I won't charge you. Take off your tunic."

Magnus handed him the garment. Then he filled and lighted his pipe with steady fingers, and watched the operations.

The gold braid looked very fine on the rough khaki cloth, and these chevrons were his own, not borrowed plumes.

"This is going to do things for your pension," the tailor said, biting off his thread. "You must be due pretty soon, eh?"

"A couple of years."

"I'd sooner see you get these than a lot of swine I can think of, Magnus. But with your record and all, you're lucky."

"Sure. I'm lucky."

Nikirov came in, kicked his boots free of snow, hung up his coat. He came nearer to watch the sewing. Then he looked at Magnus with a baffled, lonesome expression.

"A sergeant, eh? What swell times we used to have."

Magnus rose and led him aside.

"Say, Nick, you must have hidden some of the stuff somewhere."

"How do you know that?"

"I'm a mind-reader," Magnus laughed. "How about a little party tonight?"

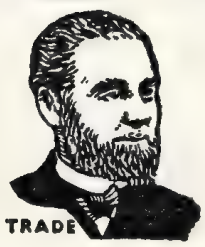
Nikirov looked doubtful. He indicated the chevrons, gleaming new, shining across the room.

"What about that? You shouldn't drink."

Magnus poked him in the ribs with his thumb.

"You big boob! That's just it. I've got to soak them off."

EXTRA



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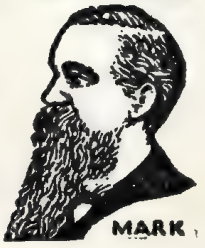


YOU TAKE MICHAELANGELO

By PAUL O'NEIL

An off-the-trail story

"What a shot!" he said. "What a picture!"

THE next time I'm sitting in Popodopolis' Grecian Grotto at three o'clock of a Sunday morning with the orange fog lights of the Oakland Bridge framed in the steamy window; with black coffee coming to assail the works and pomps of ol' demon rum, and with no more noise outside in the night than the rattle of a distant cable car—

The next time I'm helping crowd a table in Gus Popódopolis' Grecian Grotto—I'm going to lean back in my chair the way Grandpa did when he began to talk about Gettysburg, and I'm going to tell the assembled night birds from the city's journals about my little war in China.

I'm not going to talk about generals, the way Grandpa did. I'm going to talk about an artist. Here's what I'm going to say. You take Michaelangelo. You take the early Italians. You take the cubists and the surrealists. You can have 'em. I'll take a guy who saw more beauty in this cruel world than they ever imagined—a newspaper photographer named Willie Schultz.

Willie was in a rickshaw which stopped within a few feet of my automobile in Bubbling Well Road, up beside the race course, on the afternoon of Bloody Saturday, the day Shanghai learned what war could mean. Traffic got jammed there almost as the China boy let go the bombs which found their marks in the New World Amusement Center, and in the crowded square outside.

I say traffic jam—it was more than that. The International Settlement's first experience with terror from the air, you remember, had occurred only twenty minutes before. It had been only twenty minutes since shattered window glass from the Cathay Hotel had spilled down into Nanking Road to spangle the horrible dead and the horrible living there; only twenty minutes since the palace across the street had been so queerly pocked by shrapnel, and since a dress had been blown up from somewhere to hang limply on a ruined marquee. It had been only twenty minutes since crowds along the Bund had gone a little crazy.

In that twenty minutes a river of automobiles and rickshaws and running humans had poured up Nanking Road and into Bubbling Well Road to clot through its own disordered efforts at escape. I met it there as I drove toward the river in response to a hurried telephone call from my office. The whole crazy show might have been arranged by some macabre stage director.

Horns honked. Chinese voices shrilled. A rickshaw overturned, and the rickshaw boy left the shafts to struggle on. The exhausts of automobiles drummed impatiently in neutral, as though the machines themselves had caught some of the demanding need for flight which possessed their drivers. And then, high above the noise in the street, came the thin, bottle fly song of the China boy's radial motor.

The horns quieted. All up and down the street people began getting out of automobiles and rickshaws. The city, and all of its people seemed to crouch a little at the sound. I got out with the rest.

Somewhere off down the river an anti-aircraft gun was raising hell. A girl, near me, said, "Mother, there's another plane," with forced calmness, and then, in the next split second, "another *plane!*" A man ran, elbowing his way, past me, looking wildly for cover. He stopped, turned, and then stood looking at the sky as though he couldn't move. I saw Willie Schultz then, a few feet away. He looked just the way he had always looked—pale hair, thin body dressed in a suit which seemed badly fitted, blue eyes which moved nervously. Before I had time to think it strange to see Willie Schultz in Shanghai the China boy pulled his bomb release.

That was the pilot whom Madam Chiang Kai-shek said was wounded. I suppose he was. I think, now, that he was trying to put those bombs into the race course, where they wouldn't do any harm. He must have been afraid a piece of shrapnel would hit them while they were still on his bomb rack. The wind was blowing so hard that accuracy must have been almost impossible. They came down slowly, like little seeds drifting out of the upper air. Standing there, watching them, I suddenly remembered college baseball.

I yelled at Willie Schultz, exactly as if I didn't know the things I know about him, and as if death wasn't hanging heavy, heavy over our heads like the sword in the story.

"Just like fielding high flies," I said. "But you don't want to catch them."

Willie's face was rapt. I kept waiting, subconsciously, for him to faint, or to fall down to his knees, or to run. He didn't. He stood there, watching. Then I thought: "Maybe they're going to land here."

I found myself saying, "Hey! Maybe they're going to hit us, Willie. Maybe—"

Willie said: "They're just like little drops of water."

Then he turned to me, with his face changing, as though he had just sensed what would happen when those bombs got down, and his voice got shrill, and he began to yell. I was afraid. For a split second I knew I was going to be sick. Then I saw, with that great, exalted relief which flows through a human when death passes by, that the bombs

were going to kill somebody else, that they were going to land across the race course, near Thibet Road, and his words penetrated my understanding.

"What a shot," he said. "What a picture! I haven't got a camera—"

The bombs, just little metal cans which dropped so quietly and harmlessly, went out of sight. It didn't seem possible that they could create the quick, blinding, sheet lightning flash which followed. It didn't seem possible they could be responsible for the great flame-shot gouts of smoke which spurted into the sky, nor the sound which tried the shocked limits of our senses, nor the quake of concussion. It didn't seem possible, but it happened. The sound rumbled into silence and debris dropped out of the thinning, dark clouds. I took a deep breath and went on living. And then—and only then—I began wondering about Willie Schultz.

IT SEEMED such a long time since he had walked up to the city desk of the old *Express* to ask for a job. It had been back in the queer, dead days in the United States when little things like automobile accidents and divorces made news. I'd been out of college only about a year. I remembered how his eyes had moved nervously, even then, as though he were trying to see around corners. He talked with a kind of jovial bravado about the big stories he had covered as a cameraman in the East.

Tom Binns, as good a city editor as ever wore out a digestion in the newspaper business, was listening to him. Tom's eyebrows lifted a little. Photographers were photographers in that day in the West, and we called them that. The sound of the word cameraman sounded a little effete. Tom asked him what he was doing on the coast if he'd been such a hot baby in Chicago. Willie lowered his voice, confidentially, and said he'd come out for his health. Tom looked at him for a second, as though he were arguing with himself, and then nodded and whacked a hand on the desk. We had a cameraman on the staff.

He didn't get along very well. He jeered openly at the other photographers, and openly tolerated the reporters. But somehow or another he seemed to like me. I think it was because I listened so attentively to his stories. Any trivial incident could stir one out of him. Names I'd read in big stories rolled like quicksilver from his tongue.

"Capone? Did I know him? Listen." He had a trick of doubling up one fist and jiggling it at the end of a loose wrist to underline his words. He talked about Mike and Pike Heitler and Legs Diamond and somebody named One-Eye Jones. He told stories about his own adventures in the big cities. "An' if I hadn't a jumped over a fence and ran into a copper, them hoods would a had me. An' I mean had me, pally." Somehow or another I couldn't quite believe him. His eyes didn't match his voice.

But he was a good news photographer. He could handle a camera. He had an eye for angles, and for distance and for light. He had ideas, too. He made his shots "off the arm," resting the camera behind a crooked elbow, and hunching his shoulder. If he liked a shot he could be oblivious to everything else. His fingers danced automatically from stops to speed to shutter release, and they were always right. His pictures were sharp and dramatic.

Sometimes when he pulled a print out of the soup his sharp face would soften, and his eyes would glow with a kind of triumphant joy. Sounds funny. But that's as close as I can get to it. His face looked the way it did when he talked about women. "Was she gorgeous?" he'd say. "A dream. I like 'em tall. And she was big and beautiful." Then his face would sharpen again, and he'd say, "But you can't believe 'em."

He almost wrecked the paper. He was jealous. He got drunk and tried to make love to a girl in the classified department. He grinned an annoying, bored grin when he was given an assignment he didn't like. He insulted the wife of an advertiser whom he was supposed to photograph for a society layout. And he talked.

It was Bill Johnston who called him.

Bill was a photographer, too. He wasn't so hot. He was fat, and slow going and careless. But he got sore, one morning, when he caught Willie Schultz

in his darkroom putting some hypo into his developer. I guess Willie had a couple of good shots and didn't want any competition when he went in to show them to the city desk. So he tried to queer Bill's negatives.

Bill saw him, dropped his camera, and swung. His fist glanced off Schultz' jaw, and Willie backed into a corner, eyes wide, and held both his hands out in front of him. Bill wound up again, and Schultz dropped to the floor and stayed there, on his knees, with tears of terror beginning to run down his cheeks.

His talking and his bravado ended after that.

I don't think he spoke a word to anyone, other than a few sullen, necessary sentences while he was on assignments.

THEN the Allen kidnaping case broke.

Did you ever cover a kidnaping? You sit. In police stations, and hotels, and in automobiles outside houses of the people involved. You sit, and watch and wait and hope you'll be lucky when the thing blows, and the kidnapers are found or the victim returned. You do a lot of other things, too, but in your off hours, when you ought to be asleep in a nice warm bed, you're shivering somewhere, trying to keep your eyes open.

Willie Schultz and I sat in my automobile outside the Allen house one dark night, parked along the curb with other reporters' automobiles, and kept awake by smoking cigarettes and taking an occasional pull on a bottle.

Sometime after midnight I sat up and started the motor for the heat it would generate, and Willie straightened, and said, "Have you ever been in love, kid?"

I said, "I suppose so," or something equally unenlightening.

"They're treacherous, kid. Love 'em, but don't let them get you." He sighed. "The gorgeous broads I've known, pally."

He tilted the bottle.

He looked at me, hesitantly. Then, as the liquor heartened him, he said, "I want to tell you a story. About me. Ever been kicked around? Have you ever had a guy hold you while another guy kicked the living lights out of you? Nope. Not you. But try to imagine it, kid."

I began to feel embarrassed. I couldn't look at Schultz without seeing him on his knees with his eyes running, and his nose red, and fear written deep in his face the way he'd been when Bill Johnson was begging him to get up off the floor and fight. He seemed to be pleading with me.

"Maybe," he said, "you've never really been afraid. Listen, pally. You've never seen a tenement. Not out in this country. I lived in one until I was fourteen. Then I ran away. I've been all over this country. Riding freight trains, living in jungles. Hungry. Cold. Stealing things, ducking the sheriff. I've been kicked and beat until I couldn't walk. I got scared of things early. I ain't big. I found out I never had a chance.

"Then something happened to me. One night two bo's—big guys they was, and drunk—had a fight under a culvert out in California. Watching them I forgot about everything else. It's hard to describe. They were beautiful. Just two big drunken bums socking each other and trying to kick each other in the guts when they got the chance. But when it was over I tried to make a drawing of them on the culvert with an old pencil. I couldn't. I tried for hours. Then I sat down and bawled. I didn't know it then, but it was a picture, see?

"Well, after a while I lied about my age and joined the army. That's where I learned how to make pictures—signal corps. When I got out I got into the newspaper business. And about the first day I went down into the basement. That big press down there was just beginning to roll. You know how they go—faster and faster, until you can't see the print any more and you can't think for all the noise. After that when I had a real picture set up in front of me I could hear that press rolling in the back of my head. It kind of got me, like women. I've done some tough things for women. If I see a picture an' I've got a camera I'm not scared of anything. I never had a woman love me, but I can make pictures. Funny, huh?"

I think I snorted. I was at the cynical stage then.

Willie was silent.

We went back to the hotel at dawn. I went to sleep for a couple of hours. When I woke up Willie Schultz had departed. He'd taken the expensive lenses from all our cameras with him. He'd taken my automobile, too. While we were still roaring about it a couple of dicks came up to the hotel looking for him. They had a telegraphic pick-up order from Chicago for him. He was wanted on a charge of murder in the first degree.

Two years before, in Chicago, the dicks said, he'd knifed some small time gangster in the back. The man had been going somewhere with $8,000 of some big shot's money.

Willie had gotten the dough. He'd spent it on a woman—a tall woman, the Associated Press said—and nobody had suspected. But when the money was gone and Willie had come West the woman had talked.

The police picked up my automobile in Los Angeles with a full tank of gasoline, and a note telling them to return it to me.

And nobody had heard of Willie after that.

BUT here he was in Bubbling Well Road, Shanghai, China, not four feet from me, looking as if it had been but a day since I had last seen him.

"Kid, what a picture!" There was a kind of agony in his voice. "They've been happening all over the joint. Listen." He stopped then, and looked at me as if he were remembering too, for the first time, all the things I knew about him. But after a second he went on, his voice lowering. "I gotta make some of these pictures. You must be here with a press service. Gimme a job. You'll need pictures."

I said: "I'll turn you over to the police."

He went back a step. "You got your car, didn't you?"

I nodded.

"What the hell, then," he said, as if that settled everything. He stood there, looking at me, poised like some furtive rodent ready to scamper away. "You wouldn't turn me in, pally."

The traffic jam started to loosen up. I remembered again that a few blocks away there was horror in a street or building where those bombs had struck. I said, "You're lucky. I'm in a hurry," and got back into the automobile.

He jumped in with me.

"Listen, kid," he said. He had a hand clamped on my arm. "I mean it. About a job."

I started thinking. The bureau was hard up for men. We'd been hiring all sorts of people—elevator operators, and beauty specialists, and attorneys and, I think, a dentist or two—to use as leg men. And the photographer we had hired was a portrait man and not much use for what we wanted. The war had happened without warning, and it was a war that would be told by pictures.

"All right," I said. "I'm nutty to do it. But God knows we need pictures. You go get a camera. Rent one or buy one or something, and get over where that bomb hit. Get down to the Bund after you're through there. Make some pictures. Then we'll see. But listen, you little rat—" I grabbed his lapels, and yanked him over in the seat—"If you try any funny stuff I'll jam a chair leg down your throat. And then I'll send you back to tell the judge about that murder."

His face lit up, and he said, "Okay," hastily, and scrambled out of the car.

"You've read about the things those bombs did in the building and in the crowded square. I looked it over with the awful stench of death and the peculiar dusty, quarry smell which rises above ruined pavements, coming through the handkerchief I held over my nose. I called the office, and then got down to collecting lists of dead and wounded.

I didn't see Willie. When things quieted down at the office we split the night into watches, and I tried to get down to my apartment in the Broadway Mansions to get some clothes. But the Japanese had closed the Garden Bridge and Museum Road Bridge, and I couldn't get across the creek. The Cathay had a closed sign up, but I got to a clerk I knew and he found me a room.

Willie came in just as I'd decided that bombing or no bombing I was going to get a little sleep. I was going to try, anyhow. There was a radio in the room,

and it kept calling names of people, announcing that their friends or relatives were alive or dead or hurt or safe somewhere, and I kept listening, fascinated.

"I forgot to ask what service you were with," he said. "I've been looking everywhere for you. Listen. I got some shots, but I haven't any darkroom. I've got some chemicals. I'll develop in your bathroom. Okay?"

I said okay, and went to bed. I heard him working in the bathroom for a while. Then I didn't know anything until the horrid jangle of the telephone awakened me before dawn to get back to my desk. Willie was sleeping on the floor, rolled up in a blanket. I left him there.

He came into the office with his negatives in the morning. He had something. Maybe they didn't look beautiful to you when you saw them, but they were beautiful to Willie. And to us they were news, dramatically told. After that he stayed in my room, and developed there.

THE war got along, and became routine, like everything else. We established beats in the Settlement and in French Town, and arranged for observation posts on the tops of buildings, and lost sleep over the drudgery of co-ordinating the news, and sifting the rumors and checking the floods of queries which came out from San Francisco.

We had rumors enough for three wars. The Russians were going to bring armies and artillery and supplies down through secret passes of Outer Mongolia. Just how, nobody knew, though an American automobile salesman was supposed to have driven a truck up through that country to show Mr. Stalin how easy it was with the right equipment. The Japanese were bringing in another hundred thousand troops. The Chinese were going to murder us all in our beds.

The Japanese bombed by day. The Chinese bombed by night. The days were clouded with smoke, and the nights were lighted by the lovely golden fireworks of incendiary bombs, and by the multi-colored trails of tracer bullets. There were fires. There were epidemic scares. There was always noise—the sound of the Chinese batteries in Pootung, or the firing of the Idzumo's anti-aircraft guns, or the distant voices of machine guns and rifles. There was always the *Augusta,* gray-white and indomitable, out in the Whangpoo, silently and watchfully at anchor. There were many terrible things—the hunger of the Chinese, the deaths of women and children, and the sense of futility and strain about the whole thing.

We got sick of our war and of our jobs.

Willie got us pictures. He worked off the tops of buildings. He made shots of the pitiful, surging throngs of Chinese outside the gates of the International Settlement. He mirrored disaster on the emulsion of his negatives.

He worked like a man driven by some gnawing, inner force. His face got thinner, and his eyes, sometimes, were a little shiny, like the eyes of a man who has had an overdose of a narcotic. He'd come into the office and hold negatives up to the light, and say huskily, "Look at it. Look at it. Sharp as a tack. Look at that sky—used an orange filter. Look at the smoke going up there."

One night he said, "I've fallen for a dame. A Russian. God, she's beautiful." He said it as though he had been trying to hold it back, but just couldn't help himself.

But the next night he brought her up to the room. He grinned at me, proudly. "Tatiana," he said, waving expansively with one hand, "this is my pal, Harry. Harry's maybe going to buy us a drink." She smiled at him out of the corners of her eyes, and then turned to me and held out her hand very haughtily indeed. We had a drink. She was a blonde—a big, lithe girl. She had a figure, all right. She was one of the girls, I supposed, whom war had thrown out of a job. She certainly looked at Willie as though she loved him dearly. But I imagine she was used to looking that way. They left before curfew, and I almost forgot about it.

Then, a few days before the Chinese retreated for the first time, straightening the looping salient from Liuho past Woosung down to the city, Willie came into the office and leaned over my desk with a queer, desperate look in his eyes.

"Listen, kid," he said. "I've got the biggest story of the war all tied up in a little package for you. I owe you something, and here it is."

"What's eating you?"

"You know this Chink that's been going over at dawn, the one who never gets hit? He's not a Chink. He's an American. I've got an interview fixed for you. Maybe it'll be more than that. Will you go with me and see him this afternoon?"

I said, "Where?"

"French Town. I'll take you."

"How the hell did he get here in the city?"

"I didn't ask, pally. But he'll be here."

I WENT along. We started late in the afternoon. Willie took me to an apartment down in the corner of the French Concession where White Russians live. Willie knocked. That girl friend of his answered the door. I don't know what I'd expected, but it wasn't that. I said, "Hey. What goes on?" Then I felt a little foolish. Willie got me by the arm, and the girl smiled sweetly, and I walked in. There was a big man sitting on the davenport. Nobody said anything. The Russian girl gave us drinks, and then went over and sat down beside the big American. He looked down at her with a kind of crooked, jerky smile, disregarding us completely. She looked up at him. She loved him dearly, too. It didn't seem to bother Willie, though. I didn't say anything.

I was trying to decide whether the big man was drunk. He put his arm around the Russian girl, and announced, naively, "She's my sweetie," and grinned his jerky grin again.

She said, "These are the men I wanted you to see."

His eyes got hard. He had a hawk-like face, an arched nose, and thin lips bracketed by creases. He said, "So what!" getting tough about it.

"You know. You should not try to fool me this way."

He grinned again.

I thought I'd put my oar in.

"I understand you're an American," I said.

"That's right. United States Army. Ex United States Army. They washed me out, through a hospital. They had a fancy name for it, but they said I was nuts." He said it cheerfully enough. Then his face got ferocious again, and he asked, quickly, "So what!"

He went on, harshy, "Both you guys going?"

I said, "Going where?" and looked around at Willie, and saw his face was white.

"You gotta take this guy along," Willie said, desperately, jerking a thumb at me. "He's got all the dough."

I got up. I said, "Good-by, boys," and started out.

The big man got up when I did. He was six feet three if he was an inch. I didn't even see the punch coming. When I woke up again, with a sick, awful headache, I was in blackness, and bouncing around. I could hear wheels rumbling underneath me.

Willie's voice said, "You've got a blindfold on. Leave it be. Gawd, I thought you were out for good. He sure hit you. We'll be there, pretty soon." He sounded a little drunk. He sounded scared, too.

"Where are we going?"

There was silence. Then:

"This guy's going to take us along when he drops his bombs."

I just reached out and got Willie's throat between my hands. He grabbed my wrists.

"Listen," he choked. "You're in it. You can't get out now."

I let go.

"It's a big story," Willie said.

I lay there and felt my stomach trying to turn inside out.

When the truck stopped somebody took the blindfold off, and I heard the aviator saying, "Walk right ahead. You'll get to the field. Wait at the edge to your left. And get in fast. It'll be about three o'clock."

We walked to the field, and lay down in some bushes. I didn't know where we were. It was a farming district. The field was just a big pasture. There were no hangars. Off in the distance somewhere the war was beating on its anvil. The war had been bad enough when we were up close in a steam heated room. But now it jeered at us from out in the

night, knowing we had no city to protect us as we lay, cold, and lost and miserable on the wet ground.

"How are we going to get away from here when we get back?" I asked after a long time. "If we get back."

"It's fixed," Willie said. "I got it all fixed. We'll have to stay here in the bushes or something all day. Then we get out tomorrow night."

"This guy's crazy."

"Sure. That's why he's doing this. But he can fly, too, pally."

I heard him swallow. He passed me the bottle. "Have one."

I did. I was too numbed by the idea to do much of anything but lie there.

After a while Willie said, "I'm sweating."

He was silent for a second or so, and then he said, hoarsely, "I'm afraid. Oh, God, I'm afraid. That's why I got you into this. I knew I'd be afraid. I gotta have you, kid. You gotta stay now."

We had another drink.

"Willie, there aren't any airplanes here."

"Underground."

I got it.

We had another drink. I began to get a little tight, and I began to accept the crazy thing we were doing, and to see the story it would make.

After a while we both began to shiver.

THE plane appeared from nowhere in the dark. We heard the motors running, first, and then located the blue flame fluttering from the exhausts. Two motors. After a while a flare began burning up at the other end of the field. The plane lumbered down toward us. We couldn't see it very well.

A tremendous, crazy excitement began to run through me. I got up. Willie stayed on the ground. I pulled him to his feet. "I can't do it," he said. "I—"

"Give me that camera." I got his camera, and his plates, packed in two canvas bags, and we started for the plane. It turned, slowly, for its takeoff. A door was open at the back end of the fuselage. I got in and pulled Willie in, and the door was closed. The plane's motors howled and we started moving.

The ship was a Junkers transport. I remembered that some German-financed airline had been using them out somewhere in the back country. Two rear windows had been knocked out, and a machine-gun had been rigged to operate through each of the openings. There was a Chinese gunner at each piece. The seats were out of the plane, but somebody had fixed loops of rope along the sides. I got my hand into one, in the darkness, and hung on as the ship swayed and bumped. I thought of those bombs racked under us.

We got into the air. Up in the office the figure of the goofy aviator was just a shadow. He pulled the ship around in a climbing turn, smoothly, and I felt a little better. We climbed, then, for a long time. The blackness outside turned gray. I saw that the window glass of all the windows had been taken out and that pieces of isinglass had been substituted. I looked out. Ahead the rivers shone like dull pewter in the half light. Willie tied one end of a piece of rope around his neck and knotted the other end into the leather handle of his camera.

The city, an enormous expanse of rooftops, dotted with fire, swam toward us. I saw the towers of the Settlement. The plane started down. The exhausts bellowed into shrieking upper registers and the whole ship began to tremble. Willie knocked out an isinglass window with his fist. The wind howled into the opening. He got his camera out, and shot. He put the slide back and reversed the plate.

We were across the river before I saw the great splashes rising in the water near the Idzumo.

"I got it," Willie yelled. Something exploded off in the air, and I saw puffs of white smoke raveling away outside. Anti-aircraft. I'd forgotten about those guns below. The Junkers began to buck and pitch, and for a few seconds I hung to my piece of rope with the clenched grip of terror. Willie made another shot. The plane started climbing, rolling and creaking in the rough air, and with the motors laboring stridently. The bucking stopped. The ship banked and started for the Japanese lines up the river. Willie stayed by his window, eyes half closed, hair blowing wildly. He kept

shooting, his hands moving automatically on his camera's adjustments to compensate for the changing light.

It couldn't have taken more than a few minutes to drop the bombs which flashed beneath us like little cannon crackers from the Fourth of July back home. But it seemed like centuries before the transport headed away from the city and the river again.

Willie patted one bag of plates. "All used up. I gotta save the rest for the trip back."

SOMETHING began tearing into the side of the fuselage. Behind me one of the machine guns chattered, and powder smoke drifted up to us. A Japanese pursuit ship went past like a plummet, motor howling. The other gunner opened up. Willie shrieked: "Two of them!" The transport went off on a wing and I crashed into the floor. Willie, staggering, clung to his piece of rope, keeping it taut and staying on his feet. I got up with fear making me a little faint.

The Junkers climbed for the sky, like an elevator going up. One of the Jap planes must have been going past. I heard the motor.

Willie balanced there, with the bag of good plates slung over his shoulder, and with the camera in one hand; with his lips pulled back in a strange grimace, and with something happening to his eyes.

Then, suddenly, almost sobbing, he got a plate into the camera, and pulled a slide, and worked back in the cabin as the transport tried to roll us into the roof. Willie got his arm through a loop of rope, and turned around, and aimed his camera over one gunner's shoulder, and braced.

I lost my feet again, and something—I think it was one of the pieces of metal on which the seats had rested—banged against my head. I tried to get my legs beneath me. Out through the window I got a glimpse of the belly of one of those Japanese pursuits. Don't ask me where it came from. Willie shot as the Chinese gunner opened fire. He reversed his plate. Then he let go his loop of rope and brought up against me on the floor. He pulled himself up, and jammed a fist through the nearest isinglass window, working like a madman. He got the camera out the opening. I got to my feet again. Down below us the Japanese plane was burning.

Willie kept shooting.

He was yelling. "It's beautiful!"

Three feet away from me machine-gun bullets tore into the floor. The Junkers went off on a wing again. I caught a glimpse of the remaining pursuit coming up from under, hanging on the prop. And then, in the next split second, I saw its propeller stop turning. That Japanese engine, like a lot of other Japanese engines, had failed in mid-air. The Japanese pursuit disappeared somewhere, and the machine guns quit chattering, and the Junkers headed for home like a scared goose.

"I've used up all my plates," Willie yelled. "All gone. All gone." As if that made any difference. I sat down on the floor.

The transport went into a field, which looked like most of the fields nearby, for a landing. The wheels touched, and the ship rocked and bumped. It rolled almost to the bushes where we had lain the night before, and began turning. Willie got the door open and dropped out. I got out after him. We both lay there as the plane completed the turn and went back up the long pasture with grass behind it flattening in the propeller wash.

"Start crawling," I said. "We've got to get away from here." The excitement was still with me. "That nut may decide to come out hunting for us."

Willie just lay there.

"Come on." Then I said: "Are you hurt?"

He shook his head. "I forgot," he said. He rolled his head around, and looked at me, and I saw his face was white again. "I forgot. I shot up all my plates. I couldn't help it. Those pictures—when those planes were after us. I couldn't help—"

"For God's sake start crawling."

We crept away into bushes at the edge of the field.

We crawled for two hours, and finally lay in a ditch.

"Don't worry about getting back," Willie said. "It's okay." Then he put his

head into his arms and lay there without a word during all the daylight hours.

Just how we got back in the darkness is beyond me. Willie knew what to do. He stumbled, apparently stricken by some horrible weakness, hardly able to walk, until we found one of the canals which run into the upper reaches of Soochow Creek. We followed it and finally found a sampan. It smelled of vegetables. We got in and I sculled until we got into the creek. We drifted with the current, crouched low. We got out sometime near dawn at a town. A Chinese, waiting, hid us in a truck full of vegetables. And when he uncovered us we were in the Settlement again.

We went back to the hotel. We didn't stop to eat or drink or bathe. Willie went into the bathroom and started developing, and I sat on the bed and waited. After a while he brought the wet negatives out and began holding them up to the light.

You saw the pictures that the newspapers from Seattle to New York took from those negatives. The pursuit ship burning with a stricken city beneath it. The flash of airplane wings out past the hunched shoulders of a gunner. The bombs blasting into the river. The white puffs of anti-aircraft bursts. The wildest picture scoop of the war.

Willie handed them to me.

"There are the negatives, pally," he said. "There's the mess. Thanks for the job. They're beautiful, aren't they? Listen." Some queer, internal disintegration seemed to begin taking place in him. He stood there, looking at me, and in a moment he began to sob. He said, with tears trickling absurdly down his cheeks: "I've got to go. I gotta get out of here. I'm going to try to see Titiana, and then I'm going to go. I can't tell you. But—"

He stopped, broke off abruptly, and walked out of the room.

I don't know just what he did.

But they found him dead with a bullet through his head in a side street two mornings later.

NOBODY could figure it.

But three days later a friend of mine from the China Press got me off in a corner.

"Did you hear the latest? The big spy story?"

I said no.

"It's about that photographer of yours. Willie what was his name. The one that got killed. That was why. He ratted on somebody, and somebody got him."

I said, "That sounds nutty."

"It's a crazy story. Somebody—they say a Russian girl who was working for the Japanese—gave him a lot of dough to fly up over the city with some Chinese boy who's been dropping bombs. I don't know how he got into the plane. Maybe she was playing the pilot, too. Anyhow, he was supposed to shoot pictures of the route the plane took going back. The Japanese have been looking for some underground field that looks like all the pastures from here to Peking. He was supposed to make them an aerial map. He took their dough. But he didn't take their pictures."

I remembered Willie Schultz, fighting to keep on his feet, suddenly pulling a plate out of a bag and putting it in his camera.

I didn't say anything.

But the next time I'm sitting in Gus Popodopolis' Grecian Grotto at three o'clock of a Sunday morning—there's just got to be a San Francisco left somewhere in this noisy, bloody world—I'm going to lean back in my chair the way Grandpa did when he talked about Gettysburg, and I'm going to tell the assembled night birds from the city's journals about a guy who was an artist—a newspaper photographer named Willie Schultz.

I staggered out on a sandy beach.

BLUE DESERT

By BOB EMAHISER

IT'S probably hard for you to understand how a big, grown-up man could be so small as to hate—actually hate a woman. A darned pretty woman at that. Maybe it's because we both had red hair. I never did like people with red hair, even though my own is brick color. They're a mean outfit, all of them. As unreliable as those DeHavilands we used to fly in the good old days when a flyer

had to be an aviator, not a drugstore mechanic.

And then maybe it was because I was used to bossing and not being bossed. I had been over in China, teaching the Chinese how to set a plane on the ground without breaking their necks. Two years of it, and I was the boss. I never thought I'd live to see the day when I'd take orders from a woman—and a red-haired woman at that.

Of course, the things you've probably heard about Marmie Collins have all been to the good. Naturally. She was swell newspaper material. America's ace woman flyer. A cool million dollars in her own name, and the neat, trim lines of a new Sikorsky. Pretty, in a breath-taking way, like a brilliant sunset over the ocean at 10,000 feet in the ozone. And just as hard as the sun-baked hills along the Great Wall.

It's funny how things work out. Flying through a fog, you're never just sure where you're going to come out. I like the Chinese, and I was all set to go out and do a little fancy shooting with them when the war broke out in Shanghai. And then along comes the word that Americans flying for the Chinese would forfeit their American citizenship. So what? There I was, grounded and groggy and almost flat broke. Never could hang onto my money.

So I quit my job and run down to Hong Kong, thinking maybe I'll get on a boat for Manila and maybe line up something there. And while I am there, in comes Marmie Collins, the pride of the feminine flying contingent. She has come across the Atlantic from New York, across Europe to China and now is ready for a hop over the Pacific to Frisco. But she has found out that the Pacific is a real ocean, not a tub of water like the Atlantic, and she wants a navigator.

That is where I come in. If I do say so, I know a few things about navigation, and the idea of picking out a polka dot to land on in the middle of the Pacific sort of tickles my fancy. So I makes a date with Marmie Collins.

I must say she is not parsimonious about it. She offers a neat sum for the job and hands me a generous advance to meet expenses. But have you ever walked up to a nice looking kid to offer him a piece of candy and then have the little brat haul off and kick you on the shin? Well, that was the way with Marmie Collins. Every time I'd put myself out to be nice to her she'd hang one on my jaw—verbally, you understand.

Just nasty. She soon let me know that she was boss, and that she had very little use for men, either individually or as a part of the human race. I discover that I am less navigator than No. 1 boy for a red-haired harridan who is used to getting what she wants and doesn't give a damn how she gets it.

At the end of one day I hate her. I hate her attitude, her sneering words—and most of all I hate her red hair and green eyes. I never did see a red-haired man with green eyes. Maybe it's the cat in a woman with a mop like that. I think, by God, I'll put her in her place, but somehow she is always one jump ahead of me.

As much as I hate her, I love that plane she owns just as much. It is a sweet job, if ever I saw one. A single-motor Virnell, with a 95-foot wing spread, a six-place cabin and a big cockpit with dual control layout. There is a directional gyro, a Sperry artificial gyro horizon and automatic pilot, a two-way radio outfit and there is also a bubble octant to take readings of the sun's position or star sights, as well as an ephemeris and book of logarithms to determine a sun or star line on the map.

And she carried a real fuel load. I wish I'd had that ship in China. I could have skipped over to Tokio, dropped a load of hot ones and then idled back to Shanghai . . . or maybe Berlin . . . without ever setting her on the ground. We had good weather out of Hong Kong and didn't even bother to go around by Manila. We just streaked out for Guam, cruising along at 200 miles per, 11,000 and 12,000 feet up most of the time.

DO I enjoy that jaunt? Well, yes and no. I always enjoy flying. I always will. It packs a thrill that a man never gets in any other way. But I soon learn that as navigator for Miss Marmie Collins I am about as useful as an automobile

horn on a navy bomber. Twice on that trip she condescends to speak to me . . . once to order me, in that sarcastic way of hers, to get her a sandwich, and again to take over the controls for five minutes while she strolls back into the cabin.

She is so damned self-sufficient and so confounded conceited about it, that more than once, as a man and flyer, I was tempted to pitch her over the side. But she'd have probably clawed out my eyes while I was trying it.

Anyhow, we are an hour out of Guam on our way to Wake Island, roughly about 1500 miles, when we run into one of those tropical storms that seem to drop right out of a clear sky. Mister, until you've tried to fight your way through the sky in one of those yellow-bred typhoons, you don't know what a roughhouse is. Brilliant sunshine one moment and the blackness of doom the next.

Pitch dark, except for a grand display of purple lightning that leaves you blind and dizzy. And wind. . . . By God, mister, I've been in all kinds of storms, but this one had me scared. One minute we are standing on our tail and the next diving toward the Pacific, which is somewhere out of sight below. Up and down and sideways, and part of the time going backwards, with every instrument on the board suddenly gone crazy.

With a safety belt so tight it hurts, and hanging to the wheel with both hands, I find time to look at Marmie. I am hoping to God that she is scared stiff and going to yell for help. But not her. I think if the ship had fallen to pieces in midair, she wouldn't even have changed expression. When the lightning would flash, I'd get a glimpse of her face. White, all right, with that pretty mouth of hers a straight, crimson slash. But calm, doggedly calm, and never saying a word.

My arms ached from just holding on, so I know how she must have felt fighting the controls. If you had ever grabbed hold of a windmill and couldn't let go, then you'd have some idea of what she was up against. Oh, I'll have to hand it to her. She was meaner than a she-tiger, but she handled that plane as well as any man, white or yellow.

Two hours . . . nearly two and a half hours . . . and then suddenly we bust right out into bright sunshine. No rain, and only a brisk head wind that sings into the prop and gives us a little jolt now and then. I know my red hair is standing on end and I look at Marmie. There are little beads of perspiration on her forehead and the white slacks and white shirt she is wearing cling to her damply.

I saw her relax, and then she turns those green eyes on me and says, "Find out our position, Mr. Foster." She always calls me Mr. Foster, not Nick—that is, not until a long time afterward. Just that. She doesn't say a word about having sailed through hell and being thankful that we are still alive and right side up. I was so surprised that for a moment I just gawked at her. I suppose my mouth was open, for she snaps:

"Well, Mr. Foster. We've lost enough time. Get busy."

Meaner than hell. I'll bet if she'd have gone to heaven she'd have reprimanded St. Peter for being so slow to unlock the Pearly Gates. I bent over the bubble octant and all the admiration I had for her as a flyer was wiped out by the hate I had for her as a woman.

While I am busy, she finds out that the radio instruments are out of order. That terrific jolting we had taken had played hell with them. She fooled around for half an hour and then, apparently able to neither send nor receive, sat there and glared at me grimly while I tried to figure out just where we were.

I GAVE her the readings. We had made little headway eastward and were about three hundred miles south of our course. When I told her she stared at me as though she had suddenly discovered a new and unexpected species.

"What?" she snapped. "Mr. Foster, are you sure? Here, let me see your figures."

Furious, I handed over the stuff to her, took the controls and she went to work. At last she looked up and said triumphantly:

"Mr. Foster, I thought you knew something about navigation. These figures are entirely wrong." She was silent a moment and I sat there and scowled. I was so mad I could feel the color rush to my face, clear up to the roots of my red hair. I wanted to swear, to give her the kind of cussing that only a military aviator can hand out . . . and I knew a lot of swell words. But instead of that I just sat there, too surprised to say a word. No one, let alone a woman, had ever questioned my ability as a navigator before.

She sighed. "I really don't know why I brought you along, Mr. Foster," she said ironically. "You certainly haven't been much help to me so far. Here. Go over these figures again and see if you can find your error."

With that she handed me the map and figures and set our course for due east. I tried to take the readings again, but I was so damned mad I couldn't see. Everything was a jumble. I wanted to lash out and hit someone, and at that I came closer to socking a woman that moment than I ever had before in my life.

Isn't it hell what a woman can do to a man? You may think you're a gentleman, but sometime when you're under the gun you'll find out your cave man ancestors aren't so damned remote as you think.

I can't remember a great deal about the rest of that day. I had reached the point where I was flying blind, if you get what I mean. Looking back now, I can see that I should have pasted her one and taken over the controls. Instead I sat there like a ninny, my feet itching for the rudder pedals, and let her guide us to the middle of the Pacific Ocean.

We had left Guam at dawn. We should have been at Wake by three o'clock—well, maybe five, considering the storm. But dark found us hitting straight east with nothing in sight but sky and water. I felt sick. I slouched back in my seat and looked out the glass in the top of the cockpit and tried to figure out what the stars were good for, except decorations. I knew we were sunk. I was willing to bet we'd missed Wake by 500 miles, all because a red-haired woman was so damned stubborn and cocky.

She never said a thing to me, but about 10 o'clock that night she banked the ship in a neat turn and headed back west by north. Just for fun, I had taken our position and figured out we were somewhere near the Marshall Islands. The next stop was Kingman Reef . . . or maybe Tahiti.

You couldn't expect a big ship like that to run forever. In eighteen hours we had done close to 2500 miles and hadn't sighted a piece of land as big as a pin point. Mister, you don't know how big the Pacific Ocean is until you start exploring it from the sky.

SHORTLY before one o'clock, with the plane's nose pointed for Guam, or some other God-awful place, the motor sputtered. I didn't need to look. I knew we were out of gas. I saw Marmie reach down for the lever that disconnects the automatic pilot and then watched the altimeter needle begin to swing.

It was a swell glide while it lasted. I reached up and opened the trap in the top of the cockpit just in case. It's hard enough to judge your landing on water in the daytime, let alone at night, and I knew anything might happen.

The water, under the searchlight, looked black and ugly at 500 feet. There were big swells and bits of white foam where they were breaking over. I could see us smacking one of those waves in the middle and taking a long ride downward.

I'm no kid and I'm no coward. I was in at the shooting over Amiens and got my D.S.O. as well as a machine-gun bullet in the left shoulder and one in the leg. And not so long ago I took a nice ride with a Chinese student when he froze at the controls. I clouted him and brought the ship out of a spin in time to skim the top of a tree and shove my stomach back down into place. But I tell you, Mister, when I took a good look at that ocean I was scared. After all, I'm a flyer, not a damned mermaid.

We smacked the water so hard it nearly bounced me through the bottom

of the seat. She slammed off that one, cut through the middle of an oncoming wave and settled into a black canyon. For a minute I thought she was going on down. Then we lifted on a long swell and I saw the long wings were holding her up. And there seemed to be enough weight in her tail to keep her nose up, for the time being at least.

"Nice landing," I said hoarsely, wishing I could add: "and see what your stubbornness has done for us, you red-haired wind-bag." If she was scared she didn't show it. She just looked at me calmly and said:

"We'd better gather up our food and water and what other things we want and climb out on top."

I guess I was slow on the comeback for the next second she snapped: "Well, Mr. Foster, what are you waiting for? Do you want me to go get things for you?"

Speechless with rage, I stumbled back into the cabin. There was already six inches of water on the floor and more coming. And it was cold. An icy breeze swept down through that open trap door, bringing spray with it. I gathered up our little bit of food, two thermos bottles filled with water, a bottle of whiskey I had bought in Guam and shoved them all into my small handbag. Going back toward the cockpit, my eye fell on something else.

Somewhere, Marmie had picked up four native batik sarongs. They were folded, but I had seen them opened up and knew they were a good twelve feet long. They might come in useful. I shoved them under my arm and went forward. Marmie had already climbed up through the trap and now reached down for the things. I handed her the grip and then the sarongs.

"Just what do you want with those?" she demanded frigidly.

"We may need 'em," I replied and held them up.

"Just leave them where you found them, Mr. Foster."

For the first time I cracked over.

"You take them," I shouted, "and shut up about it."

I wish I could have seen the expression on her face. But I couldn't. It was too dark. She took them, and I climbed up. But if I thought my little outburst had changed our relative positions any, I was mistaken. She was the boss and continued to be . . . for awhile, anyhow. I sat on top the cockpit, the sarongs under me, the grip between my legs, wishing to God that since I had to be marooned in the middle of the Pacific Ocean, it was with a man instead of a red-haired hell cat. You could talk to a man.

IT WAS cold out there. Overhead the stars were powdery—millions of them, and you could just make out the black waves, running parallel with the wings, the white crests ghostly in the darkness. The waves snarled and hissed as they hit along the fuselage, flinging spray over both of us.

Of course, we had no lights on the ship, but I did have a pocket flashlight; and using that, I went down inside again and found a jacket for Marmie and a coat for myself. The water was up to my knees now, but from the way the ship was riding, I didn't think it would get much deeper. We seemed safe enough, with that tremendous spread of wings, unless one of those tropical squalls hit us.

I handed Marmie the jacket and she said "Thanks" as though it hurt her. Already the top of the ship was slippery and a bit precarious, what with the plane tossing about like a cork. So I made use of the sarongs. I tied the ends of two of them together, fastened one end to a cross bar in the roof of the cockpit and handed the other to Marmie.

"Tie that around your waist so you won't be washed off," I ordered her.

She looked up quickly as though about to make a sharp retort, seemed to think better of it, then did as I suggested. I did the same with the other two sarongs, tying myself fast. Then I found a bit of cord and tied the handle of the grip to a ring bolt on the edge of the trap. I felt better after that, although not much warmer.

I tried to talk to Marmie, but she was glumly silent. Despite everything, I

think I dozed a little. Anyhow, the next time I looked up the stars had slid by a little. A little later I saw a streak of pale color in the east. The glow widened. The sea turned to pale lavender, to green. Then a banner of burning gold blazed on the horizon.

I looked at Marmie. There was something heartening about the coming of day. But I must say she didn't add much to the picture. The salt water had washed away all the makeup and her face was pale. Her red hair hung limply around her face and her eyes looked as though she had been crying.

She caught me staring at her and said sharply: "You're not exactly beautiful yourself."

She said it petulantly, but it was about as near human as she had been on the trip so far.

Green and white water. I can close my eyes and see it all again. Jagged wave crests racing down on us, the highest sending a skim of water over the plane and drenching us with salty spray. And hot. By God, mister, you wouldn't think that an hour or two of sunshine would make so much difference. By midmorning, Marmie's cheeks were red with sunburn and her nose was blistered. Her lips were swollen and blistered with salt water and the sun and her eyes were reddened.

I took her little cotton jacket and dipped it in the water, wrapping it around her head, but even clothing was no protection against that burning sun. Every once in awhile I'd let myself down into the water to cool off, but there was always the danger that a wave would jerk the plane out of reach and I wasn't much of a swimmer.

We used up about half of our sandwiches that day and a third of our water. It didn't help much. I was busy thinking about steak and ice cold beer and the other comforts of civilization we could have enjoyed had Marmie accepted my calculations. Well, there was no use bringing that up again.

Not once during that day did we see any sign of life, not even sharks. As the blazing sun crept down the long afternoon slope, it burned into our reddened eyelids and the light changed on the water, whitening the leaping tops, deepening the dark sapphire of the hollows. It wasn't exactly a friendly sea. Out there you kind of get an idea of its impersonal violence, just as though you were out there where you had no business to be and the ocean is going to sweep right on past you, or over you, without so much as an extra ripple.

Makes you feel pretty small and helpless. A blue desert.

Three or four times, Marmie untied herself from the sarongs and crawled on hands and knees along the fuselage to limber up her stiffened limbs. And once she went down into the shelter of the cockpit. But you couldn't stay down there. The water was up above your knees, and every time the water connected with sunburn the results were painful.

Then sundown. The sun flared and burned into our faces and the blue waves again changed to green, a cold green against the warm rose-colored afterglow. Then it was dark again, black as the bottom of a pit.

There was a bit of a wind and I took the precaution to see that Marmie's sarongs were tied tightly around her. We were both near exhaustion, and I knew that one good wave was all it would take to wash either of us into oblivion. She didn't say anything, but she didn't object. I was damned cold. I wished I could huddle up close against her, but I knew I might just as well try to huddle up against a cobra.

So we both stretched out there, sometimes clinging to the edge of the trap, dozing at times and trusting to God and the batik sarongs.

TIME passed with interminable slowness, but at last morning came and another burning day. I don't like to think of that day. Much as I hated Marmie Collins I felt sorry for her, although I wasn't much better off. She was suffering and I knew it. Her face was swollen, and she moved about on the slippery fuselage as though every bone and muscle ached. There wasn't a breath of air and the sky above was coppery.

I handed her sandwiches and forced her to eat them and held the thermos

bottle to her lips, letting her drink as much as she wanted. Once she said: "They'll be looking for us. Someone will find us." And I nodded. But I didn't think so. I was willing to bet we were 500 miles south of Wake Island. It was much more likely that some freak current would carry us to the shores of one of the numerous Marshall Islands. We weren't on any steamship route that I knew of.

I was in agony by sundown that day, so I know what Marmie must have felt. My tongue was so swollen I could hardly talk or swallow. Although I had kept myself drenched, the sun had burned through my clothes and I felt as though I were parboiled. Every move I made would have brought a groan to my lips if it hadn't been such an effort. I couldn't even groan. Did I mention blue desert? Desert is the word, mister.

And that night one of those tropic storms hit us. I took an extra loop in the sarong that held Marmie and tied her fast to the edge of the trap. Waves might wash over her, but it wasn't likely she'd go overboard. I did the same with myself, making doubly sure by adding a bit of wire that I had disconnected from the instrument board.

I'll never forget that night. Most of the time we were under water—salt water, to say nothing of the deluge that pelted down from the heavens. I was sure the plane was sinking. Mountains of water rushed down on us; then the next second we'd be lifted on the crest of a wave. You could feel it. Then down she'd go, for all the world like one of these roller coasters and a ton of water would slap you in the face.

With one hand I clung to the edge of the trap and with the other held on to the sarong that was tied around Marmie. It seemed merely a matter of time. I couldn't hang on very long. My arms were numb and I had the feeling that the most blessed thing in existence would be to just let go and ride out on the crest of the next wave. Black as that water was, it looked almost welcome; more so when I looked forward to spending another day in that broiling sun.

And then I heard a strange sound, a sound that rose above the howl of the wind and the sharp crash of waves against the side of the plane. Either thunder or surf. Landsman that I was, I knew that much. I listened again. The sound was much nearer, almost deafening. I peered into the blackness, straining my eyes to see the rocky wall that I knew must be there.

And then I saw it. It was just like piloting a plane through fog and coming out with the side of a mountain dead ahead of your prop. I could almost feel myself pull on the stick to shoot her nose upward. Instead I jerked Marmie. I tried to shout to her, but my throat was all shot, so I leaned close to her, putting my lips against her ear and said:

"Land. We're being washed on the rocks. I'm going to untie you. Hang on as long as you can."

She nodded, and I'll swear that even then she was unafraid. I held on with one hand and started to untie the sarong with the other when we hit.

There was a crash and I felt myself catapulted into the air. The sarongs had parted like threads. I came down in icy water and the next second was swept away in the blackness. I tried to fight, but I might as well have tried to keep the sun from coming up. I was hurled along, battling constantly to keep my head above water and seldom succeeding.

And then suddenly I was in calm water. I found out later that I had been swept completely over a rocky reef into a sheltered lagoon. Dazed, I managed to wiggle my arms and legs enough to keep me afloat and a few moments later staggered out on a sandy beach. Above me, the wind was screaming like all the demons of hell, but no more than a brisk breeze troubled the ground.

I lay sprawled on the sand until I could get my breath and then started to search for Marmie. I hadn't any more than started than I caught sight of her, far out in the lagoon. She was floating, as though half dead, and I plunged into the water and swam toward her. When I reached her, I found she was making a feeble movement, but as I grabbed hold of her she gave up. I towed her into shore and dragged her up on the beach.

The next thing I knew the burning sun was beating down on me.

ONCE in France—the time I got the two bullets in a brush with the Huns—I side-slipped down to a field back of our own lines. I was out before I ever hit the ground. My eyes were closing and I can just remember whipping back the joy stick as I saw the brown flicker of earth. When I came to a couple of doughboys were trying to pry my hands loose from the stick.

When I opened my eyes to the blazing sun that morning, someone was jerking my arms. I looked up and saw Marmie bent over me. I had a good grip on what was left of that sarong tied around her waist and she was trying to pull loose. I grinned at her—or rather tried to, because my lips were stiff as corrugated iron—and let go.

She was a sight. Her face was as red as her hair . . . and puffy. And her clothes. By God, mister, it's amazing what a little salt water will do to clothes. They were in tatters. There was a big rip in one leg of her slacks and I saw a great, blue bruise there. I sat up and stared around.

We were almost in the center of a crescent-shaped beach and a quarter of a mile out the big waves boiled in white fury over a long rocky reef, broken only at one place, just about wide enough to get a rowboat through. Back of us was jungle . . . palm trees and undergrowth. On either end of the lagoon were high, rocky cliffs.

A nice place, and dry. I struggled to my feet and Marmie said:

"The plane . . . gone."

I nodded. "Not much doubt of that. And lucky for us we didn't go with it." I looked around and walked back into the shade of a tree, peering out at the beach. No sign of life anywhere, except sand crabs. Then down towards one end of the beach I saw a black spot. Something that had been washed high up on the sand. I walked toward it. It was my handbag. I opened it hopefully. Everything in it was ruined by the salt water except the tightly-corked bottle of whiskey, which was two-thirds full. I pulled the cork and took a long drag.

Mister, I never tasted anything better in my life. I felt like a new man. I hurried back to Marmie with a new spring in my steps and held out the bottle. She shook her head.

"Take a drink," I ordered.

She started to get angry, then apparently thought better of it. She held the bottle up to her lips and drank, sputtered and handed it back. I took another drink and then decided to do a bit of exploring.

I don't know the first thing about tropical plants, but I did recognize coconuts and bananas. And a hundred feet back in the jungle I stumbled onto a tiny stream of clear, cold water. I sat down and stuck my feet in the water, smashed a coconut on a rock and peeled a banana. I hadn't forgotten Marmie, not for one minute.

Did I mention, mister, that red-haired persons are an ornery crew? Yea. Well, I'm no exception. You see, I took an awful lot off Marmie Collins while I was in her plane. She was boss, and besides I'm not much used to women. But here on this island it was every man for himself. And it was my turn to do a bit of bossing.

Pretty soon I heard her coming through the jungle. I didn't turn, but I heard her utter a hoarse little cry. She flung herself on the ground and buried her head in the water, drinking until she could drink no more. She got to her knees, brushed the wet hair back from her face and flashed those big beryl-green eyes at me.

"I'm hungry," she said, holding out her hand. "Give me some."

I took a man-sized bite out of a banana and shook my head.

"Get your own," I growled.

Once in Singapore I saw a newly-captured tiger in a bamboo cage. The way he glared at the curious crowd made me think of Marmie now. Her eyes were almost glassy and her blackened lips drew up, showing white, even teeth.

"Oh," she exclaimed, "I wish I were a man."

I glared back at her. "So do I," I said calmly. "If you were, I'd have punched your head a long time ago. If you're

hungry get your own food. There's plenty of it."

I took another bite of banana and I guess it was too much for her. She climbed to her feet and started off toward the beach. A short time later I found her greedily feeding herself.

I felt much better after eating and walked down on the beach again. And here I made another discovery. Clear down at the end of the cove where the beach ended in a rocky wall, most of the plane had been washed up. It was smashed to bits, but I had an idea a lot of it could be salvaged to rig up shelters for us. After all, it looked as though we might be there a long time.

I WENT over to the plane wreckage. Marmie, evidently feeling much better, had discovered it by now and was prowling around, examining odds and ends. She straightened up as I approached and gave me a haughty glance.

"I think you'll find enough metal here to fix up some sort of shelter for me, Mr. Foster," she said. "If you get busy now you can finish it by sundown."

For a second she almost had me buffaloed. Then I started for her. I guess I must have been pretty tough looking with three days growth of beard on my face. And I'm a pretty good-sized man, too. She backed up and I reached out and grabbed her by the hair. She yelled and grabbed for my hand with both of hers. I held her hands and then shook her.

"Look here, you little red-haired squirt," I yelled. "I'm sick and tired of being bossed by a woman. I'm boss here. Understand? You got us into this mess; now make the best of it. And don't try to tell me what to do. Get busy and start hauling this stuff up the beach."

I let go and shoved her violently and she staggered back, glaring at me.

'Oh!" she breathed, furious. "You beast! I won't. I won't do a thing." And she turned and ran along the beach.

For a minute I was sorry I had touched her and talked to her like that. But I had a real he-man hatred for that woman and I was determined to take no more of her bossing. So I merely shrugged and started to work.

I found a nice place just inside the fringe of trees and made sort of a clearing with the thing I called a knife. Marmie sat and watched me sullenly.

I was better than I thought. I took the best pieces of the wings, braced them between palm trees, put a back on the thing and cut palm fronds to lace a thatched roof. Then I moved in two of the cabin chairs, gathered a lot of fig-leafed plants for a bed and called it home.

All the time I kept my eye on Marmie. I knew she thought I had capitulated and was fixing up the place for her. What a surprise she was going to get! It was nearly dark when I finished and I went back into the woods, gathered some more fruit and sat on the bank of the stream and ate. The sun was down when I got back to my shack.

Sure enough, she had moved in. I stood in front and looked in. She was seated in one of the chairs, hands on her knees, her nostrils quivering and a look of defiance on her face. I growled, as much like a wild animal as I could, grabbed her by one arm and fairly threw her out.

"This is mine," I snarled, "and you stay out. If you want me to fix you a place, you bring that stuff up here and help with the work."

She stood there for a moment and looked at me. Then she laughed, a wild laugh, and walked off down the beach. It was practically dark by this time and I knew she hadn't eaten. It worried me at little, but not much. I stretched out and was asleep almost instantly.

I awoke some time later to find the rain pelting down and a good share of it coming through my thatched roof . . . but not too bad.

I wondered about Marmie and I suffered the ordinary qualms that you'd expect of a gentleman. But not for long. I was too sleepy.

She didn't tell me until long after how she spent that night. A night of terror and misery. She had crawled under the shelter of a big tree just at the edge of the jungle. Not much shelter and the sand was hard. She was terrified when she heard some animal in the jungle

nearby. She thought it was a tiger, but we found out later it was a wild boar—there were several of them on the island.

Then the rain came. She huddled close to the tree, wet and cold, and sobbed until exhaustion and morning came together.

She slept for a couple of hours after sun-up, found something to eat and then came to where I was repairing my roof and stood in front of me.

"What would you like me to do, Mr. Foster?" she said with venomous politeness.

I looked her over as though I hadn't seen her before. She was pretty, all right. She had a strip of yellow sarong tied around her hair and another strip around her waist to hold up her torn slacks.

I led her down to the plane wreckage and pointed out parts I thought she could carry. I took the big ones myself. And I must say she worked like a man. And not once did she speak to me. Once or twice I caught her studying me sullenly and looking as though she'd gladly stick a knife in my back . . . if she had the knife and a chance.

I didn't give her the chance. Despite the blazing sun, we kept at it and fixed up a place for her about twenty-five feet from mine.

It was better than mine. I set her to work cutting bamboo and put a front on it, with a narrow doorway.

WE MADE a lucky find that day. Going through the wreckage we discovered a metal box that had been in a locked compartment in the cabin. Inside were a dozen paper books of matches, a pair of scissors, a pocket knife and a ball of heavy cord. Of course, the matches were invaluable. And the cord almost equally so. I not only made fish lines, but a rude bow, which, with a half dozen arrows, netted us a small boar the next day. I was pretty good with that bow after a little practise.

Talk about going back to nature, mister. By God, we did it. That night, we built a fire and roasted fish on long sticks . . . small fish that were bony but tasted as good as any beefsteak I have ever eaten in civilization. And through it all, Marmie Collins, politely and coldly distant. I think now that perhaps she thought I was a little mad.

But for the next three days I kept her too busy to do much thinking. We gathered coconuts and stored them in our huts, fished, hunted and gathered a great pile of wood on top the high cliff to be set afire for a signal if we ever sighted a ship—not that I ever expected such a miracle to happen. I knew we were somewhere in the Marshalls, far off the regular ship lanes.

I don't know when she first began to change. I think she was too proud to ever break down all of a sudden, but gradually she began to change. After our first few days of furious work, we settled down to a routine life. In the long hot afternoons we'd sit in the shade and look out to sea. A never changing blue desert, stretching as far as the eye could see. Maybe she hated me even then. I don't know. She hadn't yet appealed to me as a woman. I couldn't forget that she had sneered at my navigational calculations.

She was simply another person, more beautiful now as sunburn changed to golden tan and we took on the healthful appearance that is bound to come with living outdoors and leading quiet, sane lives. Not that I was any beauty, with my red, straggling beard and practically no clothes.

During those long afternoons, she began to talk to me, with marked reticence at first, but slowly opening up. Telling me about her life in New York and asking me numerous questions about my own life. And, of course, we were like a couple of kids when it came to discussing aviation and all our adventures. Only when I'd get too friendly, she'd back off stiffly and close up like a clam. So I did the same with her, more than once walking out and leaving her to talk to herself.

I don't know when it started, but one day I discovered to my surprise that she was calling me Nick. And I was addressing her as Marmie. She actually gloated the day I killed the boar, and we dined like a king and queen that night. And of a sudden I discovered I—well, I guess I was actually fond of her.

But I didn't realize how far it had gone until the evening we sighted a ship. She came in plain sight of our little cove, a big freighter. It was almost dark. We had eaten our dinner and I was lying down in front of my shack. Then I saw the ship. I let a yell out of me and looked around for Marmie. She was nowhere in sight.

I started out on a run up the beach and started to climb the cliff to where we had that pile of wood ready to light. And just as I reached the top I caught sight of Marmie. She was standing near the wood and staring out to sea. The big ship was in plain sight. I stopped and waited.

She stood there for a long time. Then she came back to the pile of wood and stood looking down at it. I was so close I could see the matches in her hand. Then she turned around and looked at the ship again.

Once she looked furtively around to make sure she was alone, then stared out to sea. I waited. The ship was getting farther and farther past our island and I was mystified. At last there was nothing to see but a plume of smoke on the horizon and it was practically dark on the island.

Rescue had been within easy reach and Marmie had deliberately let it pass. Why?

It sort of scared me. My heart was pounding and my throat ached. I thought maybe I was getting some of that tropical fever you hear so much about. And then, hardly knowing what I was doing, I sat up and crawled on my hands and knees to her side.

"Marmie," I whispered.

She turned and looked me full in the eyes. Mister, did I say I didn't like green eyes? She wasn't the same person. I was looking at a stranger. Her eyes were misty and her red lips had a soft curve to them. I reached out and touched her and she leaned toward me, her face upturned to mine.

I LOOKED at Captain Bardsley uneasily. He was a fine looking man with iron gray hair and a lean jaw. He had been stretched out in front of my shack, smoking a pipe and listening to me yarn. Now he looked out to where his ship lay at anchor just beyond the reef.

"But you did light your little wood pile," he objected. "Otherwise, we would never have found you."

"Oh . . . that." I laughed easily and felt my chin. Captain Bardsley had loaned me a razor and I was clean and slick as a drugstore pilot. "That I was telling you about was two months ago, cap'n. We sighted your ship yesterday and hailed you because we want to get married."

Marmie came running toward us. "Hello Captain," she greeted, her little white teeth flashing in a bright smile.

He stared up at her, admiration in his face as plain as the prop on a ship.

"You're sure you don't want me to take you on to Sidney?" he asked.

She shook her head, smiling. "No, thanks. We'll wait until you come back . . . if you'll marry us . . . and leave us plenty of supplies. You see—" She hesitated and looked at me, blushing. "We want to have our honeymoon here, before we go back to civilization. Don't we, dear?"

I nodded, grinning like a silly kid. Captain Bardsley eyed us tolerantly.

"All right, if you say so. I'll go back on board and return this evening for—for the ceremony."

I walked down to the edge of the water with him and he glanced at me sternly. As he stepped into the waiting small boat he said:

"Foster, either you're the damnedest liar or the smartest man I ever met. In either event you're the luckiest person alive."

I stood watching the boat pull out from shore, then went back to Marmie. Captain Bardsley had given her a small mirror and she was combing her red hair.

"Darling," she said, holding up a tattered strip of yellow sarong and pointing to an equally tattered red strip, "Should I wear the yellow or the red for my wedding?"

"Red," I said promptly. "It's symbolical. When two red-haired people get together—"

By God, mister. Would you believe it?'

HUNG DRIVE

by ROBERT E·PINKERTON

Logs were melting under him.

YOUNG WARD STANTON was in a bad hole, and all he seemed to do was dig it deeper. Driving Burntwood River was a tough job for any man, and here was a kid yanked out of a city and given one hundred fifty of the hardest, fightingest log drivers that ever stood in caulked shoes.

Mark Stanton, his father, could handle them. Mark had cursed them and hustled them and asked them to do impossible things. He'd fought with them and drank with them. But drunk or sober, boiling mad or only in fun, Mark could always whip any one of them. He'd never asked them to go into a

risky place where he didn't go first. He'd proved he was the best man on the Burntwood, and they loved him like a dog loves his master.

Now Mark was dead. He'd chanced his life a hundred times on the river, going into it with his eyes open and the sun shining and knowing what he did. But he had to get killed sitting in his office when the flywheel of the sawmill engine flew into a thousand hunks of iron. Mark never knew what hit him.

We were all up-river waiting for the ice to go out and for Mark to come and start the drive, and it jolted us pretty hard.

Few had worked for Mark less than ten years, a lot of us twenty, and feeling the way we did we'd have driven those logs without a foreman, or with just the kid coming along to watch.

There's where Ward Stanton made his first mistake. He brought Ed Cole, a stranger, to be walking boss, which was like smacking one hundred and fifty men on the nose all at once.

"Though I may not take the drive out," Ward said. "Rufus Purdy has made an offer for the logs as they lie on the bank. Perhaps I should sell them."

That was another jolt. Mark Stanton was dead, but for anyone else to drive his logs was an insult.

"Sure you should sell them!" Sandy McKinlock snorted. "It's a tough river. Only Mark could get logs down it."

"You don't think I could?" Ward asked.

Sandy looked him over, slow and with a sneer spreading across his face.

"Your dad couldn't think of quitting, let alone talk about it," he said.

Ward got kind of white, and when he looked around he could see that the others felt like Sandy. What he didn't seem to understand was that meant fight, or that Sandy McKinlock would have gone to hell and back for Ward if the kid had acted like his dad and beat the everlasting tar out of him. But Ward tried using words instead of fists.

"I had thought I could depend on you men, being old friends of my father—" he began.

"Listen, cub!" Sandy cut in savagely. "If Mark Stanton asked us to take a drive upstream instead o' down, we'd 'a' done it. For Mark. But Mark would be the last man to ask us to do something for anybody else. Even for his own son."

The drive started a couple of days later, but you'd never know it was a Stanton drive. No yipping when the first logs rolled into the river. No singing when the jam crew went floating off on those big sticks of white pine.

Ed Cole, the new walking boss, showed that he knew his business, even if he didn't know the river. He showed he was hard as the best of them, too, and maybe he'd have made a drive of it if it hadn't been for Ward.

The kid was as big and husky as his dad. He looked a lot like Mark and walked with the same swing. A little way off you'd think it was Mark coming along the river trail. Working down on the water, men would look up at him and remember Mark and how he ran a drive. Then they'd get glum and techy just thinking about it. The work slowed. Things went wrong.

To make it worse, the river was low, there not being much snow that winter. Logs were grounding all along the banks, and the rear crew was having a tough time cleaning up. Little jams were starting in shoal places with nobody doing much about them.

Ed Cole raved up and down the river, threatening to fire everybody. A few old drivers quit. The rest growled. Nobody put heart or back into the work.

Being timekeeper, I'm neither flesh nor fowl in a logging outfit. Lumberjacks don't think I'm one of them, but I live with them almost the year around and I just about know what they think. And, keeping time, I saw more of Ward than the others.

"Listen, feller," I told him one morning. "What happens if this drive is hung?"

"Thirty million feet of white pine will be ruined by pine borers," he said prompt.

"You do know something about logging! What next?"

"I'll have nothing for the mill to saw. I lose the cost of the stumpage, the cost of cutting and driving. I lose so much

I can't meet some loans dad left. That means I lose mill, standing timber, everything."

"Wah!" I grunted. "In six weeks you lose all it took Mark Stanton twenty years to drag together."

It made me sore, knowing all Mark had done and how Ward had gone to school and college over in Minneapolis an lived there after he'd learned everything. He could have been as good a man as his father if he'd stuck home and worked.

"It's all lost now!" I barked at him. "This crew would have taken the drive through to the Gulf of Mexico if you'd come and told them how things stand. Now, bringing Cole and just hanging around and not doing anything yourself, they don't care what happens."

Ward didn't say anything for a minute and I watched him. It was the first idea I got that he wasn't soft as he looked.

"There's a lot more to it," he said harsh like. "Dad was as fine a logger as ever lived, but he was a child in business. I've been studying law. Was all ready to practice, and when I got home I saw what a bad jam he was in."

"Meaning there's more than this drive to lick?"

"It's all tied together. And I can't let anyone know I am suspicious."

THE next day old Rufus Purdy drove into camp. He was a long, thin Yankee who charged ten per cent for cashing his own pay checks, and not a lumberjack who thought anything of himself would work for Rufus. Mark Stanton would have slung him in the river. But Ward was polite and shook hands.

"I am grateful for your suggestion that Mr. Cole handle the drive," he said. "He is as efficient as you predicted."

Maybe fifty men were in camp eating second lunch, and a growl went through them like winter wind in white pines.

"Glad to help," old Rufus said. "Now this offer I made for your logs. I'll renew it, at a dollar a thousand less. I hear your drive may be hung. Lack of experience, probably. You should pull out while you can."

"But everything is going fine, Mr. Purdy!" Ward exclaimed.

"I've had bad reports and I've looked things over. I'd say you'll never get a log to the mill."

Ward only grinned. "You forget that a Stanton drive has never been hung," he said.

Old Rufus got sore and talked about logging and Mark's mistakes in a business way. Made it sound as if he wanted to help the kid out.

"Just because you've always spent your summers on the Burntwood, fishing and camping with the Indians and paddling a birch bark canoe, there's no reason to believe you can take logs down it," Purdy said, smiling his nasty way. "I was willing to assume a risk out of respect for your father."

"I appreciate it," Ward said, and that's as far as Purdy could budge him.

That left things worse than ever. Every jack in the crew knew Rufus Purdy had always tried to cheat Mark Stanton, and they couldn't stomach Mark's son not poking him on the nose. After supper that night the camp sounded like a cage of bears.

"This ain't no Stanton drive!" Sandy McKinlock growled. "Mark's wore out his coffin already, turnin' over so much."

There should have been a battle. Sandy had asked for it. But Ward never made a move. And if Ward didn't fight, Ed Cole had reason to. I hadn't seen him back down from anything. But when I looked around for him, he was gone.

A few minutes later Ward walked off in the dark to his tent. The grumbling kept up.

That crew was about through. I felt sorry for the kid. Being with him quite a bit, and sharing the same tent, I didn't see him like the rivermen did. They were sore because he wasn't exactly like Mark.

Something had to be done. Just giving Sandy McKinlock a licking would have helped a lot, and I went to bed, thinking I'd talk to Ward about it. But he wasn't in our tent. A bull cook said he'd gone down river. Ed Cole being away, that looked funny. So I hit along the trail.

WE WERE camped at Dam Three and half a mile below was a couple of wigwams. When I passed I heard Ward laugh, and sure enough he was in one of them birch bark tents talking to a squaw and some kids. Talking their lingo, too.

Ward asked me in. The smoke was thick and the smell thicker, but he didn't seem to mind. Pretty soon he told me how these were old friends and how he'd always spent his summers on the Burntwood. I could see the Indians liked him. They talked and laughed like they do when they know a white man is friendly.

An hour later an Indian came in. Didn't say anything, just sat down. After things had been quiet a while, Ward asked him a question. The Indian talked then, slow and making a lot of motions. Ward seemed to understand, gave him five dollars.

"Ain't you got something better to do than chin with them *nitchies?*" I asked when we left. "Your drive's hung, feller, unless you do something quick."

That didn't bother him any.

"I think something has been done," he said. "Or will be tonight. The Indian told me."

Couldn't get any more out of him, except that he asked me to stand guard over the dam till daylight. We'd never done anything like that before. All the drive was down to the dam, acres and acres of logs, and we would go on the next morning.

"What could happen?" I wanted to know.

"Dynamite in a sluiceway could wreck us," Ward said.

I saw a light then. Purdy had been in camp. And Ward had been decent to him. Remembering what Ward had said, I could understand how the old crook didn't want that drive to go through. Purdy had Ward over a barrel and was trying to keep him there.

Thinking about it all, I didn't get sleepy. But nobody came near the dam. The bull cooks rolled the crew out at three o'clock and in the first gray of dawn Ed Cole ordered sluicing to begin.

"Both gates," he said. "And shove logs through fast as they can be crowded."

Ed went down the river trail. The jam crew and those tending out on bends hopped the first logs and went sailing off. Ward hung around a bit, watching the sluicing. He jerked his head at me and we started down.

Ward didn't say anything. We came to the Indian camp and he talked to that same Indian. Went off in the woods with him a bit and then started down river fast. A little way and we hit a slough. Ward went along the bank of it, looking at the ground.

"Too late!" he yelped when he came back.

I had to run to keep up with him, but it wasn't for long. Sandy McKinlock was tending out at a bend and Ward stopped.

Most of the time a man is tending out he just stands watching. Might go a whole day without wetting a pick pole or a peavey. Only when logs hang up does he have to get busy.

Sandy had been busy, and he was getting sore. He was ready to heave the whole drive into Ward's face when the kid came. But before he could say anything, Ward was talking.

"Dad knew it was a mistake to put two gates in Dam Three."

Sandy blinked.

"We never used but one," he said.

"Of course. And with a big drive he sluiced only half the logs and took them on to Dam Two. Let water pile up for the second half."

Sandy just looked at Ward. He'd never heard the kid talk this way before, hard and sharp.

"Cole thinks we haven't much water and had better use it while we can," Ward said. "What do you think?"

"He's headin' for trouble if he chokes up White Rapids," Sandy growled.

"Dad had one jam there and said he never wanted another. Big rock in the fastest water. Another boulder ten feet to the right. If a log happens to catch—"

"They don't," Sandy told him. "Water shoots through there like the preacher's wife passing a saloon. Logs go straight with the current if they ain't crowded."

"Correct!" Ward snapped. "When dad

had a jam in White Rapids it was because he sluiced both gates and a string of boom-sticks went through with the logs. Chained together, they caught on those rocks. Three men were killed breaking that jam."

That stumped Sandy.

"Huh!" he barked. "How you know?"

"I've driven the Burntwood every year with my father," Ward said. "Listening to him afterward, I mean, when I was back from school. He'd take up each bend with me, each riffle."

"But you ain't been on the drive since you were a kid."

"I've spent nearly every summer on the river. Maybe I know it better than you rivermen. Saw it when it was low. Learned every rock in it. That tickled dad. He said I'd make a good river boss if I hadn't wanted to be a lawyer."

Ward stopped. His voice had cracked a bit. Sandy and I was just staring at him.

"That's why this drive has got to go through!" Ward barked, savage as a whole pack of wolves. "It's still a Mark Stanton drive, even if you river pigs did go back on him. Even if Rufus Purdy is trying to wreck it. All it needs now is a proper walking boss. And that's you, McKinlock. Get busy. I'll take care of Ed Cole."

He was gone, yanking me after him. Sandy's caulks were fast to the ground. Ward ran back, said something I didn't hear, turned Sandy around and kicked him in the pants.

WE DIDN'T walk down that river trail now. We ran, and I could hardly keep up with Ward. Pretty soon we heard men hollering and he ran faster. When we came out on the reach where White Rapids was, we could see why the yelling.

A bunch of logs had lodged on the rocks in the middle.

And up at Dam Three logs were being sluiced through both gates fast as men could pole them. Three miles of river packed with logs. We were in for a jam that would hang the drive.

Ed Cole was on the bank, yelling, telling men to do this and do that. But nobody was making a move. They couldn't. Those logs were held by two rocks in the middle of as fast water as I ever saw. When you come upstream you can see White Rapids a long way off. White against the green timber. Solid white, because it's just one long mess of water that can't seem to make up its mind where it's going but is in a tearing hurry to get there.

Those river pigs didn't do anything, because they didn't have a chance. We usually had a bateau there, but Cole had sent it downstream. Only an insane man would think of riding a log down to the jam. A boa constrictor couldn't have stuck to one in that water even if he'd wrapped himself around it.

Besides, what if a man did get to those logs? If he got 'em loose, where'd he be? Just nowhere, far's it would ever do him any good. White Rapids are bad.

Ed Cole started cussing when nobody'd do anything. He called some rough names until a driver told him to cool off.

"I notice you ain't doing anything," the driver said.

"But this drive's hung!" Cole yelped. "All those logs coming down! Catching there! We can never break out a jam in such a place."

River drivers were coming from above and below, hearing the yelling. And logs were coming, too. They didn't all stop. But every once and a while one would lodge against those already there. And the bigger that jam got, the more logs it would catch. In no time it would reach from bank to bank.

"Anybody tell 'em to quit sluicin'?" a driver asked.

"I sent a man first thing," Ed Cole said.

That struck me as queer. I hadn't met anybody running up river. But when I asked Ward if he'd seen a messenger he whispered sharp, "Shut up!"

That got me. Too many queer things were happening. And Ward, knowing this meant the drive was hung and he had lost a fortune, didn't seem a bit worried. Just stood around listening.

Ed Cole calmed down. There just wasn't anything that could be done, and

every riverman there knew it. If Mark Stanton had been alive they'd have got out to those rocks somehow. Following Mark, of course. Now they had no reason to try.

"One of those flying machines they're talking about might get a man to those logs," a riverman said.

Ward whirled and stuck his nose in the fellow's face.

"Bet a pair of socks I can get out there!" he barked.

"Hell, kid!" the driver laughed. "I'll bet a dozen pair against one, and be cheatin' you."

Somebody yelled that the logs had loosened and we all turned to watch. They did move, but only lodger tighter. Men began talking about how they'd never seen logs catch on those rocks before, except the once when the boomsticks came down.

More drivers came from up and down river. More logs caught on the jam. Men stood around watching because there wasn't anything else to do. Before long they'd be getting their time and going to town. Mark Stanton was dead, and so was his outfit.

After a bit Ed Cole began to swear in a queer way.

"Look at the damned fool!" he yelped.

All of us saw Ward paddling around a bend above the rapids in a birch bark canoe. I couldn't figure out how he'd got it so quick, until I remembered him talking to that Indian.

Ward was coming fast, with the current and the quick strokes he took, dodging and twisting among the logs and shooting past them.

"What good'll he do if he gets there?" Cole grunted.

Nobody said anything. Nobody believed Ward would try it. Those log drivers thought a canoe was a toy, something men didn't play with. Something that had no chance in white water. They expected he'd come ashore.

Only Ward kept in the middle. Once he stood up to have a quick look. Easy as a man on a log. First thing we knew, he'd hit the rapids and was coming smack down the center.

We couldn't see him at first. Logs was pitching and sloshing on both sides and spray was shooting high. If two of them logs came together it would have been like cracking a peanut.

But Ward kept his paddle working, hauling or giving a lift, bouncing over those big curling waves like a cork. Sometimes that canoe was standing on end when a backset caught it.

"He ain't got as much chance as a tallow candle in a forest fire," a river driver said.

They were all sure of that. They could pole a bateau in white water and ride a log from stump to mill saw. But to them a bark canoe was just as safe as a market basket.

AND then Ward stood up in that rearing, pitching hide of a birch tree. Stood up in a thing we'd fall out of if we was lying down in it. He'd dropped his paddle and held a pick pole. His knees was bent a little, his left leg ahead. Far as we could see, he was guiding that canoe with his mind.

And straight ahead of him were the logs jammed on those two rocks. We figured he was going to pile on top or be sucked under. And neither way did he have a chance.

"Some of you'd better start down river and pick up what's left," Ed Cole said.

Dynamite couldn't have budged a man. Ward was traveling now, and only fifty feet to go. He crouched a bit more, shifted his pole. That was all. Next bat of an eye and he'd be done for.

His pick pole reached out and slammed into a log lying crosswise at the top of the jam. The canoe swung broadside and stopped easy as a feather. I saw it, but I couldn't believe it. Ward stepped out like it was a lake shore of a calm evening, and he picked the canoe up with one hand. Lifted it right off a hungry wave that was grabbing for it and carried it across the jam to the lower side.

Sounded like a wind, the breath going out of us.

"He ought to be dead!" Ed Cole said, savage like.

Nobody noticed that. We was past thinking. Only our eyes knew Ward had taken a peavey from the canoe. But instead of starting to work logs loose

on the sides, he went to the lower end of the jam and stood studying it.

He stood there quite a bit, sometimes taking a little pry on a log. Then he got on his knees and reached down. We couldn't see what he was doing. We only knew that if the jam started to haul it would take both his arms off at the elbows.

Ward kept fussing at something. Spray was flying and the canoe hid him. He must have been five or ten minutes at whatever he was doing, and it was no way to break out a jam.

But after a while he got up and took a look all around. He rolled in a couple of logs on one side and pried some loose on the other. Maybe fifty logs was in that jam. Nothing to speak of any place but in the middle of White Rapids. And they had to come out, every one. Especially those lodged against the two rocks. Until they were free, we could never get a drive through.

And no river pig that ever stuck a steel caulk into white pine bark could get those last logs loose. Not even Paul Bunyan in his prime. The rest of them, sure. But what would a man stand on when he worked at those key logs—out there in the middle of a young Niagara?

We knew it. We knew it was a miracle the kid got there at all. Anything more, it just couldn't be done.

That was when I first noticed Ed Cole. He was still as the rest of us but he wasn't excited. A cat, feeling the same way, would have been licking the cream off his whiskers.

But I forgot Cole. Ward Stanton kept prying logs loose from the edges of the jam. Not much except the current held them. Some were bound, but working others out freed them. After a bit the whole mess started at once.

Ward seemed to know it first, because he'd dropped his peavey and was jumping for the canoe. He picked it up by both gunnels, took a running start and dived off into the rapids.

Like a boy doing a belly-flop with a sled. Logs were melting under him, turning over and upending in that swift water. But any kid raised in a logging town never forgot how to run on bobbing timber.

He got away, came scooting out on our side, clear of the jam, just lying there in the canoe.

That's the first time we noticed that no more logs were coming down river. If those one ton beasts had been lunging through White Rapids it would have been different. But there was only waves and tearing current, and pretty soon Ward got up, took his paddle and caught an eddy.

Then he was on the bank right below us, lifting out his canoe, and lifting something from it. He came up the bank to us, and we saw it was a boom chain. Four feet of heavy links with a toggle at each end.

Ward stopped in front of Ed Cole. Ed was looking at him funny but not saying anything.

"This boom chain holding two logs together caused the jam," Ward said. "Getting it out released them from the rocks."

"But how'd you know the logs were chained?" I asked him.

"Because Rufus Purdy brought three chains and an auger yesterday," Ward said in a hard voice we'd never heard before. "I set an Indian to tracking him and he saw one of the crew get them last night. And this morning I saw fresh auger chips in a slough below Dam Three. Fresh prints around there showed six caulks missing in the left shoe. Maybe some of you remember when four boomsticks chained together lodged in White Rapids and three drivers were killed."

A hundred men were there by now. Ward looked at them.

"You're a yellow bunch!" he snarled. "Rufus Purdy was trying to steal the Stanton outfit! It's the reason I took the walking boss he suggested. I had to get the goods on him, give him rope to hang himself. Had to watch you lie down on Mark Stanton while I kept quiet. What would Mark think of you now?"

Not a man whispered. There was too much of Mark in what he said and the way he said it.

Ward spun around on Ed Cole.

"Going to show the caulks missing in your shoe, or have I got to turn 'em up?"

ED COLE was ready. He let loose with a roar and two swinging fists. Ward went over backwards. He kept going, rolling end over end. Ed Cole was big enough to hit a man that hard.

Only somehow, tumbling head over heels, Ward stopped when his feet were down.

That's the third miracle we saw that day. There he was, rolling, and here he was coming back like a log through a sluiceway.

He didn't say anything. His arms weren't swinging. He was a human bullet, and he hit Ed Cole at the belt with his shoulder and jackknifed him. Carried him back and right through some Norway saplings.

That sort of thing couldn't end a man like Ed Cole. Ed got to his feet. Ward turned himself into a circular saw this time, and he snarled like one. He swung more fists than an octopus could handle. Cut Ed's eye, slit his cheek, mashed his nose.

Only that didn't stop Ed. He was bigger'n Ward and he'd fought more men than Ward Stanton knew. Ed came slugging back, but he had to do a lot of hammering to take the heat out of Ward. That boy was madder'n any man I ever saw.

Ed got him at last. Sent Ward staggering back. The kid was dazed. Kept shaking his head and dodging. Once I thought he was running away. But he whirled around and got himself set, and he wasn't burning up with hate any more. One look at his eyes and you knew he was going to fight different.

Ward did. It wasn't fighting like we ever saw. He danced around, in and out, lashing with his right, poking with his left. All of a sudden he stepped in close. Too close to get any power into a blow, I thought, and I didn't really see it myself. But next I knew, Ed Cole was toppling over. And you had a feeling he wasn't going to get up.

Ward stepped back. He gave his head a jerk that sent blood flying.

"Now you can see Cole's caulks!" he snarls. "But before you look—any of you who'd like some of this?"

He was ready for them. Ready to fight the whole crew. Right then I saw how he'd had to chain himself down all along.

"Maybe Mark Stanton is dead, but this is still a Stanton drive," he told them. "It ain't going to be hung, even with a bunch of yellow-bellied jackpine eaters swinging the peavies."

Just then Sandy McKinock came running up.

"I closed both gates like you told me," he said to Ward. "Only, where's this jam you figured on?"

Those river pigs started to laugh. They started to whoop and yell. Started a regular war dance.

And they kept doing that. All the way to the Stanton mill boom.

"Coming up, sir—for the shot!"

THE WET-EARED PUP

By WARREN F. ROBINSON

THE seaman by the massive winch of the *Hans IV,* whale-chaser, turned bristling whiskers and stolid blue eyes upon the clean-shaven young man who had just come aboard.

"So you're the new mate?" inquired the Norwegian, scowling.

The American was prepared for that antagonism and ignored the question by repeating his own. "Where is Captain Hartvigsen?"

"In his cabin. *Ja!*"

Knight, late mate on the now defunct tramp *Tybee Belle,* strode away from the seaman, opened a door to the midship's cabin-structure and bumped into a hurrying little man.

"Say!" snapped the small man, steady-

ing a steaming pot of coffee, "Vatch out!"

"Where can I find Captain Hartvigsen?" Knight asked.

The cook of the *Hans IV* grinned. "Captain's in his cabin oop there! So—you're the new mate?"

Without replying, Knight mounted the steep stairs. They ended in a compact chart-room. On one side he glanced into a tiny galley. Across the ship his eyes peered into a little cubby where a big man sat on a bunk, drinking.

"Captain Hartvigsen?" Knight asked, quietly.

"*Ja.* What you want?"

"I'm the new mate, sir."

This then was to be his new skipper? Knight studied the yellow-whiskered face with its blurred and watery blue eyes. Well in his cups, Hartvigsen looked like a mangy old lion. Burrel had said that Hartvigsen was "the hardest case I've even known! Bitter, cold-hearted. Drove his last American mate to heavy drinking and partial insanity. So tough he can't take a ship out under his country's flag—no company there will have him! Had to work for the new American whaling company. Even the British companies wouldn't take him! And his crew—man, they are all hard nuts, too!"

On his part, Hartvigsen focused drink-swimming eyes on Knight and saw that he was good-looking, young, confident as hell—like all the damn Americans! Knight, eh? Not another Galahad like the last one? Hartvigsen thought of the former mate and what had happened down in the ice of the frozen south. He pictured Knight down there and started to laugh.

Like explosives, his burst of drunken laughter rang through the ship. The seaman by the winch heard it, nodded slowly, and grinned. The cook heard it and shivered and wet his lips slowly. A beefy-faced fireman in the engine-room listened, smiled viciously, and smote a fist into a palm.

Hartvigsen bellowed, "So—you're the new mate!"

Knight's fists bunched. He restrained his anger with difficulty.

He had come up the ladder of command the hard way, yet was still a young man when serving as mate on the old *Tybee Belle.* At Montevideo, one day, a seaman's strike had tied the ship up. After futile wrangling, the company's branch office there had headed the ship for the scrap heap, leaving her officers practically "on the beach."

Knight had haunted Burrel, the company's agent, until that harassed man had at last given in.

"This is November, Knight," Burrel had said, "and in June there will be an opening as skipper of the *Savannah Belle.* Yes, she's a beauty for a freighter, and fast. You're quite young for the job and I'm not satisfied you're hard enough.

"Yet I like your appearance and know your record. If you go whaling for a certain firm in which we have an interest, I'll swing that job for you when you return in the spring."

"Blubber hunting?" asked Knight, surprised.

"Exactly. The toughest trade at sea today. If you satisfy Hartvigsen, the *Savannah Belle* is yours, Mister!"

MISTER KNIGHT, ex-mate of the *Tybee Belle,* strode with no further ado to the waterfront and boarded the *Hans IV* where she lay with her four sister chasers moored astern the monstrous factory vessel, *Hans Mawsen.*

A landlubber might have thought her a tug, but Knight saw that the *Hans IV* was built to do a swift and deadly job at sea. Her little triangular gun platform, high in the bows, held a wicked though stubby whaling cannon. Beneath a white lookout barrel atop a strong foremast hung a pendant of powerful springs and blocks, and there were other "accumulator blocks" on the deck just before the ponderous winch. Amidships was a compact cabin structure with a high square bridge-deck. Back of the bridge was the tall black funnel and behind that the single lifeboat.

Yet the *Hans IV* was filthy with dirt over her corrosion and rust. And she stunk to high heaven.

As quickly as he had begun roaring with amusement and scorn, Hartvigsen reverted to rage. Swinging upright to his feet, he gesticulated and swore, partly

in Norse, mostly in English for the benefit of the new mate.

"Ever been at the helm with a finner rising under the bows? Ever seen Antarctic fog? *Farn!* Leave you on deck in such a fog?

"That I should come to this—nursemaid for a wet-eared pup!"

"I was Mate of the *Tybee Belle,* sir!" Knight replied. "I was thought to be a good man."

Hartvigsen stared. Did this child dare to interrupt when he, the greatest gunner in the Antarctic, was speaking? He swore crackling Norse oaths that rang like shrapnel against the walls of the chart-room.

"I'll break you bone for bone! You'll crawl with your tail between your legs before I'm done! You want to go whaling, eh? So? I'll give you whales, and sea, and ice—and hell!"

Taut nerved under that tongue-lashing, Knight felt compelled to swing his fists, then the contrasting emotion of relief that he definitely was Hartvigsen's mate and on his way to the captaincy of the *Savannah Belle* overcame the urge to strike.

"Your orders, sir."

Hartvigsen, who had expected one of several reactions to his customary initiation of new American mates, fell back slowly onto his cot. The former mate had shot off his mouth and been knocked down for his trouble. Knight might also have quit without a word. But, "Your orders, sir!"

Hartvigsen's eyesight was so blurred again he couldn't see the stern, set young face at that door.

"We head south tomorrow at dawn. Look over the ship till then, and be ready to take her out. And don't get soiled and messed up in the meantime. *Ja.* I want the chance to rub you in the muck myself! Bah!"

KNIGHT turned, saw the ladder to the bridge close by, and mounted it swiftly. He was red-faced, bristling, when he hit the top and stepped onto the square bridge deck. Wet-eared pup, eh? He'd show that drunken fool a thing or two before long! Look at the dirt on this bridge! The binnacle green and unpainted!

"She hasn't been wiped down since her last season, I bet," Knight growled, aloud. "Well, here goes—"

"She's good enough for Captin Hartvigsen, Mister," said a hard voice. "Und good enough for us."

It was the seaman who had been accosted at the winch a few minutes before. He was standing beside Knight now, and was clearly the bigger of the two—a lumpy fellow with fists like red hams.

Knight asked, sharply, "What's your name?"

"Gunderson, Mister. Unt I vas saying—"

"Gunderson, I'm mate of this ship. Captain Hartvigsen is off duty. I'm in charge. I want this bridge cleaned and the brasswork polished—now. Get going!"

Fixing the antagonistic Gunderson with steady eyes, Knight went below.

As he passed through the chart-room he was hailed by Hartvigsen, "You, pup, come here."

"Yes, sir?" quietly.

"What's Gunderson doing on the bridge?"

"Cleaning brasswork, sir!"

"Cleaning brasswork? *Farn!* Listen, you pale-livered—"

"Everything is coming along fine, Captain. Just take it easy!" responded Knight evenly.

Captain Hartvigsen, unable to focus his eyes, glared groggily at the misty face at the door, swore a round of viking oaths and inwardly admitted to himself that that pup had him licked right now. The great gunner couldn't lick a man he couldn't see—

But Knight was gone below, to send surprised and rebellious seamen, engineers, and firemen scurrying about the *Hans IV* with mops, buckets, scrapers, polish! He requisitioned paint and brushes from the big factory ship and got it, partly by the abruptness of his requests, partly by his confident, able air. Hartvigsen swore and drank himself into a stupor in that little cabin, while all about him the *Hans IV* was primping and sprucing up like a hand-

some but untidy girl who has just fallen madly in love.

At dawn the *Hans Mawson,* with her five swift chasers, stood out of Montevideo for the frozen south. And on the bridge of the *Hans IV,* the late mate of the defunct *Tybee Belle* felt a quickening of his heart as they met and passed *Savannah Belle.*

"See you next June!" Mister Knight said solemnly, saluting the *Savannah Belle* as she swept past gracefully.

Gunderson, at the helm, saw that salute out of the corner of an eye, and heard the words. "Crazy!", he thought. "Wait till Hartvigsen tests him out down there in the Weddell Sea!" Well, one more flop by an American mate and the company would have to admit Hartvigsen was right about Norwegians being the only whalers! And that meant Gunderson would become mate of the *Hans IV!*

SOUTHWARD for whales—to the Weddell Sea!

Out of the sunshine of Montevideo and the Plata River into the Antarctic summer of biting cold, damp and penetrating. From day and night into the shrouded dimness of the midnight sun, where the season is one long misty day.

Strung out and scattered, the five chasers trailed the bulky, coal-heavy factory ship into the Antarctic for days and weeks. Never had Knight known a ship could so pitch and toss as did the *Hans IV.* In waters where storms sweep from clean around the world of the great cold seas, the waves are the highest known. There the water has the power of living battering rams. The seas break spiteful, white, cruel. Yet the chasers rode those seas behind that bigger vessel. Counting the white barrels, in that awful waste of ocean, Mister Knight, late of the *Tybee Belle* began to understand the tempers of these Norwegians, their moodiness, Hartvigsen's drunkenness at Montevideo.

Hartvigsen, sober, was stolid, silent, speaking only to give a curt order, yet he drove his mate from task to task. The mate had ordered the ship cleaned from stem to stern. Well, now he must keep it that way, come hell or high water!

They halted at Stanley in the Falklands, while each chaser drew up to the factory ship and was refueled to capacity. They stowed the coal in every available spot besides the bunkers. The ship was black, filthy.

"Clean her up, mate," Hartvigsen said. "Make her shine. And don't forget the brasswork."

So the crew grew to hate Knight. Driven from above, he had to drive them. Gunderson maintained the air of an animal about to turn on its keeper. The cook swore over his pans. The beefy-faced fireman, Chadwick, mouthed, "Blast 'is bloomin' 'ide—the blighter!" and vowed by all the stars he'd "see the beggar broke before this v'yage is over!"

And they were not yet in whale-rich waters!

Eleven men on a steamer tinier than the whales it had to kill. Eleven men, each with his own ambitions, his own secret thoughts. A ship so small that every inch of space had its essential purpose. Miles of thick whaling cable, dozens of harpoons, hundreds of pounds of explosives, tons of coal, lances, paints, food, men! All crowded into a little steamer with massive engines and a winch built to handle a hundred tons of living flesh fighting for life!

On a quiet day off the South Shetlands, they coaled again and the whole fleet began whaling into the waters off the Graham Islands and into the Weddell Sea.

Following charted courses, they cruised southward, and Hartvigsen's whole being seemed full of eagerness and life. He initiated his mate into the secrets of preparing the whaling lines, the gun, the harpoons, and the explosive grenades. Knight was astonished at the excellent quality and the size of the cables that lay coiled in great holds under the foredeck. Leads from them were rove out of the holds, through the winch, through the blocks on deck, up to the blocks on the foremast, down under the gun platform and out over rollers at the bows. Here a "foregoer" of fifty fathoms of smaller but no less

strong line was spliced to the big line, and the other end fastened to the open shank of a heavy harpoon.

Knight was shown how the four barbs were held back by twine, how the cannon was loaded with powder, wadding, and harpoon, and the "iron" held in place with other cords. The foregoer was coiled on a small circular plate forward and under the gun's snout.

Then Hartvigsen loaded grenades with careless ease. There was powder enough in the tiny harpoon room to blow them all to bits, but the skipper was careful only of the measurement for each bomb. Knight shivered a little in the presence of delicately leashed powers strange and new to him.

"One slip and we go to hell quick, *ja!*" laughed Hartvigsen as the ship pitched into heavy sea. "Take this bomb now and—look out! *Farn!*"

The loaded grenade dropped out of his big hands as he swore in surprise. Knight made a leap for it, caught it an inch before it hit the floor, went sprawling in a bundle against a keg of powder and howled in sheer astonishment and fright! Expecting it to blast him into eternity in a second, he sat there, white and sick! Seconds went and Hartvigsen's derisive laughter bellowed peel on peel. Sweat oozed from Knight's forehead.

"Idiot!" Hartvigsen laughed. "Pup! There was no time-fuse in that bomb yet! I thought you were leaving me like a scared yellow pup!"

Knight rose weakly to his feet, handed the grenade over, and fought inwardly to keep from rending that whiskered face into shreds of raw meat.

But the story got around. Gunderson gave the mate sly, snickering looks. Knight overheard Lars and Chadwick chuckling below the engine-room hatch.

"Wait till Hartvigsen misses a shot!" Chadwick was saying, "And that bloomin' mate 'ull bloody well 'ave somethin' to crawl about, so 'elp us!"

"The last fella, he fainted when Hartvigsen done that!" Lars was saying, softly in his sing-song Norwegian voice. "But dis fella is maybe harder nut to crack! Hartvigsen crack him yet, *ja!* Ve wait! Ve see some fun py unt py!"

"'E jolly well 'ull go back to the farm," Chadwick laughed, "if 'e gets back to Montevideo alive. Hartvigsen 'ates 'im, and that's bad, bad!"

So they cruised southward and met bergs, great glistening things, silent and menacing. The killers kept clear of those bergs. One, much melted at its base in the relatively warmer summer sea, turned over one morning. It was miles away, but the crash and the waves of that overturning were felt with a shock on the chasers. The crew watched Knight's face, and there was scorn in Hartvigsen's blue eyes. Knight thought of the *Savannah Belle* and remembered what Burrel had said—

"If you satisfy Hartvigsen, the *Savannah Belle* is yours."

A bitter realization came to Knight that Burrel had known full well no man could long keep sane under a man like Hartvigsen in the Antarctic. Here was a world of cold, water; ice, a few sea birds, seals, whales. Nothing else except the few men and ships. Bad enough without Hartvigsen.

Apparently Hartvigsen's intention was to ruin all his successive mates so that the American owned company would have to go back to Norse mates. Knight knew that on the factory ship were several other Americans, some English, and other nationalities than Scandinavian. The other chasers, too, had a man or two not Norse, but in all cases except mates, the men were seamen or laborers only. The company's policy of American mates was causing trouble throughout the fleet.

The idea was to learn the secrets of Norwegian supremacy in gunnery, but it was failing. Hartvigsen was willing enough to show Knight every trick. The mate saw that Hartvigsen knew Knight would never go whaling again, in his right mind! Or—did Hartvigsen intend to really break his mate, mentally and physically? That menace loomed terribly and Knight faced it thoughtfully.

They'd have to kill him first!

THEY raised spouts one morning, and chaser after chaser boomed explosive harpoons to bag finners not yet fat but still whales.

The *Hans IV* drew off from the others, with Hartvigsen by his gun, eager-eyed. Gunderson, in the barrel, had spotted a bigger finner than any other. At the helm Knight followed Hartvigsen's hand signals.

"Coming up! *Fisk!*" yelled Gunderson.

Hartvigsen demanded, "Where?"

"Port a point, sir! There! Coming up for the shot!"

Knight followed the skipper's signal. There was a light ramp which had been rigged from the bridge to the gun-platform, and Hartvigsen had gone stamping down to his station when the whales had first been sighted.

"Breaking water!"

Then silence over the whole ship. Not a shout from the men. Orders spoken down tubes from the bridges—no clanging signals now! Nothing to scare that whale as his head, then his back arched out of the sea under the moving bows of the chaser!

Knight saw a dark form framed by whitening water, saw Hartvigsen swing his gun, aim, and—*broom!* The air rang with the explosion!

"Missed!" screamed Gunderson. "Down *fisk!*"

"Missed!" howled Hartvigsen, glaring back up the ramp.

All eyes turned to Knight.

The exploding grenade spattered water and metal under the bows, and the winch was retrieving the cable as swiftly as possible. Never do to let that line foul the propeller! Ships had gone down like that!

Knight saw in a glance that all hands were blaming him for Hartvigsen's miss. Why? He'd followed directions perfectly. He himself had seen that arching leviathan under the bows a bit to port. He had a sinking feeling that Hartvigsen's glare was all the conviction needed to swing the crew's weight against him.

"You wet-eared pup!" roared Hartvigsen, shaking a fist as he mounted the ramp. Seamen recovered the harpoon and the foregoer and fished them aboard. The gun was being reloaded at once.

Knight kept his temper in hand while Hartvigsen, before the crew, handed him a deadly tongue-lashing. That was twice. Knight said to himself that a third time could not be endured.

There were no more whales that day. Twenty-four hours later they stumbled across blue whales. Excited words spread from bow to stern. "Blue vales! *Ja!*" Biggest of all the whales. Fatter than finners, foot for foot, even that early in the season.

Knight followed directions again, missed no cue.

Blue whales travel alone or in pairs, not like finners in schools. A lone blue whale rose under the bows, after hours of stalking it, in perfect position for a shot after dozens of previous positions had proven far from ideal.

Hartvigsen fired.

All hands saw Hartvigsen stamp in rage as the smoke cleared.

Gunderson shouted down, "Missed! Down *Fisk!*" The bomb exploded as before, endangering the thin metal bows of the vessel.

Hartvigsen came up the ramp, silent as death, his face a mask. Knight prepared for action. Hartvigsen shouted one sentence.

"There goes my luck for sure! *Ja!*"

He went below without another word.

And then it was that young Mister Knight learned how completely a whaler's crew depends on a skipper's "luck." Orders were obeyed sullenly. Dark looks followed the mate whatever he did. The late mate of the *Tybee Belle* smoldered with burning anger.

A WEEK passed and no whales did the *Hans IV* take. All the fleet was talking about it. There was a small standing pay for all hands throughout the fleet with or without whales, but it was scant pay for the dangers and the hell of the Antarctic.

Every man longed for the bonuses attached to every dead whale.

A skipper, in luck, could earn twenty to forty thousand dollars a season! A ship in luck would ring with Norwegian song and laughter. Already the other chasers were merry spots when bringing in the compressed-air-swollen carcasses

of blues and finners, and a few humpbacks.

Hartvigsen began drinking again.

Fog settled down.

A hundred miles from the mother ship, fog-bound, with ice-blink glowing at times through breaks in that shrouding fog, the *Hans IV* steamed slowly. Her coal was getting very low.

The sea was calm, just a steady swell.

That meant ice close by.

Petty jealousies between the men swept into open fights. Chadwick was brought on deck with a cut head. Refused to say who did it but demanded to see Hartvigsen, "On important business."

"Captain Hartvigsen is in his cabin, Chadwick," Knight said. "I'm in charge."

"Oh, you are, eh?" Chadwick asked, glowering, "As man to man, you, I'd like to 'ave it out with you, some time."

Knight replied, evenly, "If you give me any lip, it may be sooner than you think. I'm mate and I'm going to stay mate!"

Chadwick, bandaged, went below, sullenly.

With bunkers nearly empty, the *Hans IV* tried to find the mother ship. Knight plotted and replotted his course. He had nothing but dead reckoning to go by. The radio man was reporting urgent requests from the mother ship for all killer ships to return at once.

With a lookout by the whaling gun forward, another in the barrel aloft, and himself on the bridge almost continuously, the mate, red-eyed from strain, had the ship steaming at half speed. At intervals the fog horn was sounded and anxious ears waited for the telltale echoes of sound reflecting from bergs. Now and then those echoes did come and the vessel would creep at quarter speed till the berg was sighted or had gone by with its promise of certain death to a metal ship.

The toughest trade at sea, today. If you can satisfy Hartvigsen—the *Savannah Belle* is yours, Mister!

Fog.

Persistent radio orders to report to the *Mawson* as soon as possible. One-way communication only! Well, Knight would let the company know, some day, what it felt like to hear but be unable to reply!

The bunkers emptying of coal. The mate had them swept and every corner of the ship scoured for lumps of the precious fuel.

The fog broke on the morning of the third "day."

Knight saw the smudge several miles to starboard just as Gunderson reported it. The *Hans Mawson*, no doubt! The radio man shortly hurried to the bridge to say the *Hans IV* had been sighted. It was the mother ship. A wet-eared pup had seen the chaser through fog to a waiting, anxious mother ship.

The little chaser had barely up-helmed and headed for the smoke when Gunderson reported spouts a little to port.

"Blue vales! Ja! White water!"

Knight raced below to rouse Hartvigsen.

"Blue whales, sir!"

"With my luck, what's the use? You, smart pup—try your luck!"

Knight stared at Hartvigsen. He had a feeling that guiding the ship through that fog to safety had been nothing in the eyes of Hartvigsen, supposing that he had known anything about it. Hartvigsen would be sober enough by the time they reached the mother ship to swear he'd been sober all the while. Hartvigsen would get all the credit for saving the ship from fog and ice.

"You, smart pup, try your luck!"

Sarcasm with whales spouting ahead and the ship already giving chase! Where was the seamanship in Hartvigsen? Could any man be so low that his personal hatred for another could prevent him from living up to the best traditions of his trade? Well, young Mister Knight would show that drunken Norseman that Americans did not give up because of "bad luck!"

TRY his luck! Why not? He knew how the gun was loaded, aimed, and fired. He had loaded grenades himself. Hartvigsen had told him not to fire too soon if ever he took the gun.

The mate raced for the bridge and bellowed orders that startled even that tough crew. Excited, incredulous, they sprang to their stations, with Gunderson at the helm and another seaman at the barrel.

Soon it was "Breaking water, ahead —bit to port! So!"

"Coming up, sir, to port!"

Each time the whales had spouted too far ahead for a shot.

At half speed the *Hans IV* followed the faint "wakes" as the two blue whales dove from each pause for breath. Had they been finners the ship would have needed top speed to overtake them. But for blue whales slow, cautious stalking was the order.

Knight, by the gun, trembled with excitement. Could he hit anything at all? Well, he had to! If he got this whale the crew would be on his side, surely.

With the crew for him, and a fat whale alongside—probably Hartvigsen would be won over too! That was Knight's hope.

"Coming up, Sir! *For the shot!*"

Knight took a deep breath; as the heaving bow raised and lowered through the swells, he watched intently for the tell-tale blue-green shadow of the rising monster.

Bigger than the *Hans IV* came the leviathan, yet only its back broke water behind the portion of head that showed. It curved over as the spray of its spout drifted down upon the eager gunner—acrid breath from a beast from the deep. The fin curved out of the sea! Knight swung his gun down. How close that whale was! Gunderson had played the game like a seaman, kept the ship to her course!

When it seemed he must scream—or shoot—Knight squeezed the trigger, felt the shock of the recoil, and was blinded by the hot black smoke of the discharge!

"Fast *Fisk!*" from the lookout.

He had won the first blow, at least! Fast fish! Wow! The smoke cleared and he saw the line whizzing into the water, straight from the bows! He heard the winch's brakes protesting in a dry scream as the winchman obeyed Knight's raised hand for halting the running cable!

Sproom!

The grenade had exploded in the whale, five seconds after discharge from the gun! Knight knew that the exploded bomb point had sent splinters of deadly metal into the vitals of that whale and the barbed harpoon points were now opened.

Yet the whale continued to sound as the *Hans IV* ceased her forward motion. The grenade had failed to kill at once. Maybe the shot was too near the tail, in the muscular part instead of the lungs and heart! It would need another bomb to finish that great creature, Knight realized.

"Another bomb and harpoon!" yelled Knight.

A seaman ran for the store-room, shouting. Gunderson was guiding the ship as the line came up slowly and the chaser was towed ahead slowly. The whale broke water in a leap that took its tremendously long body far into the air above the swelling Weddell Sea's gray surface!

Back it fell with a terrific splash and was off again, swimming desperately, yet not spouting blood.

A shout behind him caused Knight to turn suddenly. The seaman bringing a new harpoon and a loaded grenade was being accosted by—Hartvigsen. The skipper was swearing in Norse and shaking the man.

"I've got a blue whale out ahead, Captain!" Knight shouted. "Let that man bring another harpoon!"

Hartvigsen bellowed, "*Ja.* I saw from my cabin! Terrible shot! Should have killed him right away! Bah! I'll fire this next harpoon. I'll show you how it's done, my wet-eared pup!"

The seaman handed over the harpoon and bomb. Knight saw with sinking heart that Hartvigsen was still pretty drunk. He saw too that the bomb had been fitted with a time fuse so that no time would be lost in preparing the gun for this next and important shot. Hartvigsen stumbled forward as the ship rolled in the swell. If he ever dropped that grenade—

"This is my shot, Captain," Knight

replied. "But let me load it for you and you can have the shot!"

Hartvigsen bellowed, "Get down from that gun! I'm going to fire it. I'm loading it first, myself!"

Knight hesitated. Hartvigsen was in no shape to handle that harpoon on the moving platform. And that bomb had a time fuse plugged in place. Knight felt jealously raging inside him to think that he must be robbed of the fruits of his own work, but that anger was submerged in anxiety.

Hartvigsen started up the short ladder to the gun platform and as he did he stumbled. Knight grabbed for that bomb. It had only to press against the metal of the ship and the fuse would set off the bomb! Couldn't Hartvigsen remember that grenades—

"Out of my . . . way. *Ja!* Out—"

Hartvigsen fell headlong, turning as he fell, flat onto the foredeck, and the bomb went spinning into the air! Knight saw that pointed lump of metal dropping for the deck by the winch. He saw the helmsman fling himself flat, saw the winchman sprawl behind the winch! The grenade hit the deck with a *crack!*

Mister Knight knew that life was practically over for him. On the gun platform he'd get chunks of flying metal in a few moments. On the foredeck his captain was struggling to his feet, full in the path of the coming explosion! And in that instant Mister Knight made his decision!

He leaped through the air, sent Captain Hartvigsen thumping flat out of the way, and protected the half sobered Norwegian with a living shield as the world turned into a scalding, searing flame of white heat!

MISTER KNIGHT came to in the sick bay of the *Hans Mawsen,* surprised to find himself alive. By his cot was standing a doctor, who nodded in a relieved way. Behind the doctor stood the leader of the fleet, Captain Hartvigsen, and Gunderson.

Then he recalled the horror of that moment when the world turned to white heat . . .

"Crippled?" he asked faintly. "For life?"

"No," boomed Hartvigsen, "not a bit. You'll be out of bed in a few weeks, good as new. *Ja.* And I owe you thanks for saving my life."

"Forget it, Captain. Was the *Hans IV* hurt much?"

"No. Just a couple holes in the deck. And your whale spouted blood right after that and died. Over a hundred feet of fat blue whale! Fine catch, worth thousands of dollars. *Ja!*"

"I'm sorry I wasn't a good—"

Hartvigsen bellowed, "I called you a wet-eared pup! I was a fool! I tried to break you. I missed whales on purpose! No whaler worth his salt does that. I'm the wet-eared pup—and you're a man, Mister Knight!"

Gunderson nodded. "You're a better whaleman than any of us, sir!"

Mister Knight, late mate of the *Tybee Belle,* sighed quietly. The toughest trade at sea today! If you satisfy Hartvigsen —the *Savannah Belle* is yours, Mister!

The wet-eared pup brought up a bandaged right hand in solemn salute to a gray tramp steamer that was passing by.

"See you next June!" said the wet-eared pup, very softly.

ONE STAYED. ONE WENT.

by
H · BEDFORD-JONES

A GROUP of us were sitting one evening in a corner of the Bel-air Club, and I noticed that the cigarette girl was hovering around, as though interested in our talk. This was odd, because we were discussing "firsts" of the sea—the first compass, the first binnacle lamp, the first wheel, and such impossiblities.

Why on earth would a pert lass with short skirts and a saucy eye and a cigarette tray be fascinated by such talk. Perhaps because of the salty language that slipped out now and then, I thought; but here I was in error.

"Take him aboard and go back home —now."

"There's one thing nobody knows," I said, to start things off fresh. "The first steel sailing ship is rusting over at Pedro right now. I've got a fathom of chain from her, holding up a lantern on my front porch. But go further back, to the first iron ship of all, the first iron steamer!"

"Nerts to you," said somebody im-

politely. "The *Royal William*, of course!"

"The British turned out iron ships before that," chirped up another.

"You all miss the point," I said, as the discussion warmed. "A matter of record who built the ships, yes; I don't care a hang who built them. What brain was behind the first iron ship? No matter whether she was built in Halifax or Glasgow, what was the human element behind her? What man thought of bolting iron plates together? Why did he think of it? That's what I'd like to know."

"What does it matter?" someone asked, with a sniff. "Nobody knows, and nobody cares. You could rake up some yarn, and it'd be denied hither and yon. The only important things are records in black and white."

"The only important things," I said heatedly, "are apt to be those of which no records exist that could be taken into court. The first iron ships were turned out in the eighteen forties, all right. But who thought them up? You don't know. You don't know who thought up the clove hitch or the running bowline, either, and you wish you did! If you could say right out who first invented soapsuds and why, you'd proclaim it from the housetops; but here's one of the greatest advances in commerce ever made, and you don't know the answer!"

The cigarette girl had come close to our table and was staring at us.

"I do, sir," she piped up. We all looked at her, and someone laughed.

"What's the joke, sister?"

"It's no joke. It was my great-great-grandfather," she said, and meant it.

Later that night, I took the cigarette girl home, which, considering my time of life, was proper enough.

"They're old letters that he wrote," she said, producing an old fashioned lead-lined tea caddy that was stuffed with letters. "It was before the days of envelopes, you see; they were just folded and mailed. You may take them, if you'll promise to bring them back by the end of the week."

I would pretty near have promised marriage to get at those letters. She was wrong about one thing—envelopes were used as far back as 1750, and these letters barely went back a hundred years. Well, maybe a few years over, considering that this is 1939.

Even with the passage of a hundred years, however, the use of real names might step on some protruding toes, so just bear in mind that all names herein are fictitious, as the movie labels say.

GLENN HARDIE had written those letters from hither and yon. He had written voluminously and well, but it took a lot of work to patch up the whole story. He was a Bluenose, a Halifax man, a hard, frosty-eyed jack of all trades, who had been everything from blacksmith to surveyor. Now he was second mate in the *Annie Todd*, a Boston barque so thoroughly battered by hurricane that she put into the West Indies port of San Sebastian almost in a sinking condition. She was a long time refitting, and before she was finished a lot of things happened to Glenn Hardie.

There were plenty of Britishers in San Sebastian and Hardie, having a good education, was made free of local society. So far as Hardie went, there were only two people in the place that counted. One was the lean, dark, magnetic Dr. Kinsale, of whom he made a friend in no time; Kinsale had a fine mahogany sloop and spent a good bit of time pottering around among the cays and islets.

The other was Jean Graham, whose rum-soaked, liver-soured old Scotch father was the chief commercial agent locally and living on borrowed time.

Hardie had a quick temper. His Yankee skipper was choleric and they did not get along. Upon a day, as he was overseeing repairs to the rudder post, the idea flashed into Hardie's brain and staggered him.

It came, as such ideas do, superficially full-fledged and rounded out. He could see the whole thing before him, apparently perfect; it surged up like a blinding vision that blotted out all else. Forgetful of everything, he rushed aft to the cabin and wakened the skipper from his nap, and blurted everything out.

"I've a great idea, a tremendous idea, sir! Look here, we can do away with calking, and boring worms, and a lot more troubles, for ever! There's no earthly reason why a ship couldn't be built of iron, d'ye see? Put steam engines into her, and wheel paddle-boxes, and you'd have an iron steamer!"

The Yankee skipper, who did not appreciate being disturbed, glared and purpled.

"Are you stark, staring mad, Mr. Hardie?"

"Not yet. Let me show you." An excited laugh broke from Hardie, blind to storm signals. "Build her of iron plates, d'ye see? Iron plates, shaped beforehand. They'd fasten together with rivets, for ever and ever! Half the troubles we have with wooden ships would be ended. No more copper bottoms. As for expense—"

Gathering that Glenn Hardie was thoroughly in earnest, the outraged skipper came to his feet.

"You're a sacrilegious scoundrel!" he exclaimed hotly. "An iron ship—arrgh! The very idea is enough to put a curse on you! It's only what one could expect of a Bluenose. Such a ship would be accursed from the day her keel was laid! She'd carry a curse ever after! Who ever heard of iron floating?"

One word led to another, and hot words led to blows. The upshot was a compromise; the battered skipper forbore any prosecution, and pocketed Hardie's pay, and Glenn Hardie took his black eye and his duffle bag and went ashore for good.

He was not worried. A thrifty soul, he had a bit of money laid by; and within him burned the flame of his idea, and the thought of Jean Graham, not to mention his friend Kinsale. As he very well knew, Kinsale had distant relatives in the shipbuilding game.

SO HARDIE got lodgings, pencils and paper; and keeping under cover to hide his shiner from anyone for a few days, he devoted himself to a mad frenzy of work —designs and sketches, plans, details. And through them all, at the back of his head ran the words of the Yankee skipper: "She'd carry a curse ever after!"

Glenn Hardie had a strong streak of superstition, but at the moment it was not uppermost.

By the time he was presentable, he had accomplished so much work that he had begun to realize, after the manner of inventors, how difficult was the attainment of simplicity. He was eager to lay all his great plans before the darkling lustre of Jean Graham's eyes, and if he had done this in the first place, destiny might have taken a different turn; but, finding his eye still a trifle sinister, he took a fistful of plans and went instead to have a gam with Dr. Kinsale.

A bachelor, Kinsale lived prosperously in what had once been a fine old Spanish mansion at the edge of town. He received Hardie with open arms. The evening was warmish, the cool rum drinks were potent, and if the two men had been friends before this, they speedily ripened to intimacy.

Kinsale listened to the great idea with smiling incredulity in his dark features, but upon glancing over the sketches, surmise sharpened in his quick eyes, and became swift interest.

"Word of mouth sounds absurd; black and white looks feasible," he exclaimed, as he eyed the designs. He glanced up. "You don't know anything about shipbuilding, do you?"

Hardie's frosty eyes wrinkled up humorously, and he rubbed his red cheek.

"Bad as that, eh? Well, I don't know much, for a fact. Do you?"

Kinsale nodded. "Yes. Oak ships, especially. When you bring oak from Denmark to build ships, you learn how to build 'em. I started out in the family business before I went into medicine, surgery and such nonsense. Fine old trade, ship-building. You used to do it pretty well by rule of thumb and a good master carpenter. These new-fangled engines have changed all that. Now it's stress and strain."

He clapped his hands. A dusky servant appeared, filled the glasses, laid out a box of Havana cigars. Kinsale bit at one.

"I've a couple of books somewhere, dealing with it. You, I see, have a few damned fine ideas in regard to working with these iron plates."

"Used to be an iron worker, once," said Hardie, over his drink. His red bony face was speculative. "Think this is a feasible thing, Kinsale?"

"The eighth wonder of the world. Nobody knows the first seven; you can wager a guinea and win it hands down, in any crowd. But this is the eighth," Kinsale said with hearty assurance. "There's a fortune in it. A dozen fortunes. It'll revolutionize the ship-building art, my lad! But it'll take a devil of a lot of figuring before it's in shape to present. Strain and stress. Are you good at math?"

Hardie blinked, then comprehended and shook his head. "A dunce. I can handle a ship by dead reckoning, but can't navigate; that's why I've no master's ticket. Every blockhead around me can navigate. I can't."

Dr. Kinsale grinned, his white teeth flashing.

"We might," he said slowly, "work this thing out together. But that wouldn't be fair to you, since it's your idea."

"I need help," Hardie said. "Say the word, and it's fifty-fifty."

The other reached out across the table, and they gripped hands.

"Now look here," Kinsale exclaimed with energy. "Yellow jack's getting bad over in the *mestiso* quarter; a regular outbreak's due. I'm working day and night, getting calls at all hours, and it'll be impossible to give this thing the time and concentration it demands. What do you say to running away for a fortnight, eh?"

"Away?" echoed Hardie.

"Just that. Let the Spanish medico handle yellow jack for a while. Old Graham has a cabin on Turtle Cay, up to the north; and he's badly in need of a trip away from this hell-hole. Put him aboard the sloop, take Jean along and a boy to cook, and get off. Saturday morning. What say? We'll work this thing out together."

It did not occur to Hardie as odd that Kinsale should run away with an outbreak of yellow fever coming; it did not strike him as odd, or sinister. He did not even think twice about it, but accepted with gusto.

Next afternoon, in fact, when he told Jean Graham about everything, he was filled with delight and gratitude. She studied him curiously, for this enthusiasm was a rare thing with him; this leaping eagerness with which Kinsale had inspired him, this warm admiration for the other man, was the last thing she had expected from him. When she hinted as much, his eyes went to her with shocked surprise.

"Eh? I thought Kinsale was a friend of yours?"

"He is," she said coolly. "But I'm not blind to the faults of anyone. I'm sorry you didn't talk with me before you went into matters so deeply with him. Kinsale's a hard, shrewd sort of man, the type that bides his time and gets what he wants."

"No harm in that," Hardie rejoined. "We're splitting even in this matter; he has all I lack. We'll get on."

"I hope so." She smiled. "The idea of an iron ship sounds fantastic."

"Think of an iron kettle in water; it floats, even loaded down. That's where I got the idea. A ship's the same, only a different shape. Oh, you'll see! It'll work, if we can get the details ironed out. That's not meant for a joke, either," he added, laughing. "What about the trip? Does it appeal to you?"

"Tremendously." Her face lit up, but her eyes remained cool. Odd, he thought, how cool her eyes always were; rarely did one surprise them off guard. She was frank enough, genuine and eager and smiling, yet ever with the indefinable air of being on the defensive. He did not understand it. That was because he knew little of what a girl like Jean Graham faced in a spot like San Sebastian.

"My father needs the vacation," she went on. "And I'd welcome it. I'd welcome anything to get away from this island! That is, almost anything."

His eyes widened. "Why? Don't you like it here? A fine place. Fine people, too!"

"Wonderful," she agreed dryly. "My

father was like you when he came here; full of life and vigor and—well, intentions. Ambition, I suppose you'd call it. Now he's barely hanging on to life. Old Graham, they call him; yet he's not old at all. He's simply worn out. You'll be the same if you stay here long enough."

"Not I." Hardie shook his head emphatically. "Nor Kinsale either."

Her eyes darkened at the name. Those gray eyes had a trick of changing, now light, now dark; Hardie found it fascinating, but could not read their meanings yet. Some day, he told himself, he would. Gray eyes, always cool and guarded, belying the animation and satiny tenderness of her face, lending strength and mystery to it.

"I'm afraid," she said, "that you're blind to everything except your big idea."

"That, and you," he assented, a twinkle in his eyes. "Why afraid?"

"No, I should be glad," she replied thoughtfully. "Glad that you're blind to the sort of people here. It's a selfish place. They live here—even my father—for the purpose of getting what they can out of it. After they've got it, then it's too late to leave. Life's all sham and pretense, covering up selfish brutality and lust and greed. The sun and the rains sap out everything else."

"By gad!" he exclaimed. "What would the old hens back home say to hear such words on maiden lips? You're real. It's a rare thing."

"It doesn't come to the surface often," she said, and burst into a laugh, and began to talk of Turtle Cay.

That night, however, Hardie began to wonder why she was afraid. For he divined that behind her singular outbreak about the people and the island, there lay buried a motivating fear. It troubled him. All her background seemed placid and unruffled, to his eye; but he soon learned otherwise.

SATURDAY morning saw them off, to a fair stiff breeze that bowled the mahogany sloop along at a great pace. Five of them: the black cook, Hardie, Kinsale, Jean Graham and her father.

Old Graham came aboard with death in his face and rum under his belt, stripped by illness of all pretense at bluff Scotch heart-of-oak. Hardie, with a mental gasp, saw him for the first time as he was, and shivered. He was used to seamen who took lust and greed in their stride and made no bones about it, as a part of the daylight. He felt glad that Jean had been born before this dying man came out to the islands; the root was good.

And Jean, tenderly caring for her father, saw with defiant eyes that he realized the truth.

He joined Kinsale, at the tiller, and lit his pipe with solid satisfaction. He liked Kinsale, liked the man's capability and air of blunt frankness. When he commented on Graham's looks, the doctor shrugged.

"Aye; the old man's waited a bit too long for his vacation," he said coolly. "If you live hard, as he's done, the islands make you pay hard; his whole machinery is worn out. He hasn't missed much, either, though he's concealed it for the girl's sake. Fine girl, Jean."

"The finest," said Hardie. The other gave him a glance from the black eyes, and smiled.

"Hold the course for a bit, will you? I'll labor with the old chap."

Hardie stretched out to the tiller and squinted at the islets breaking the horizon. After a bit Kinsale came back.

"He's asleep, down below; Jean's watching him. He'll pull through if his heart doesn't stop in his sleep. Yes, she's a grand lass. I'd marry her in a minute if she'd have me."

"You'd be doing her no favor," grunted Hardie, before he thought.

"True enough," and Kinsale laughed ruefully.

They raised Turtle Cay a bit after noon and ran quickly down to it. All white coral sand, with a bungalow overhung by trees; nothing to last, said Kinsale, if a hurricane ever struck it, but so far luck had played wih him. A tiny bit of an islet, swept by invigorating breezes.

Somehow, Hardie got the flash that

the black cook, Santos, was afraid of Kinsale—merely an indefinite impression, for the black fellow was spry and merry enough. They came into the cove and landed. Kinsale found the place undisturbed and opened up. The three rooms were furnished with barest essentials. The commissary was moved ashore, and Santos took charge in the lean-to kitchen.

To Hardie, the bare, sun-swept little isle was not inviting, but to the others it was escape from the monotony of San Sebastian. Graham relapsed into lethargic repose. Jean began putting the place in order. Kinsale beckoned Hardie to work; with paper and crayon, the two men plunged into the plans for the iron ship. The feverish intensity of Kinsale to get about it delighted Hardie.

Two days, three days passed. Graham took on vigor; Jean was gone much of the time, idling about the cay or fishing. Kinsale and Hardie worked like slaves. They had got into the thing over their heads, now. Kinsale had a decided grasp on elementals, and Hardie's gift for sketching and intimate knowledge of ships and ironwork made the plans take concrete form.

The farther they got, the more feasible seemed the wild scheme. Shaped plates if iron, riveted to an iron framework—that was all. Details of stem and stern, keelson and deck; mathematics helped here. Kinsale put his full share into it, no doubt of that. On the fourth day, Hardie was amazed to find that the worst difficulties were conquered—that is, in a superficial manner.

"It's all shaping up now, fit to present to ship-builders, engineers, ironmen," said Kinsale when they knocked off for supper. "Build one such ship, make it a success, and wooden ships are done for! By the lord, d'you know what it means, man? A revolution, no less, in all trade and commerce!"

"Well, we've got the worst of the thing licked, and now I'll knock off for a day or so," declared Hardie wearily. "I don't want to talk or think about iron plates again for a while! After supper I'm going out and look at the moon."

Which he did, but not alone.

He wakened during the meal to some of the things around him. Jean had a queer look in her face. Old Graham was gruff and dignified, a sure sign that he had been at the rum; Kinsale was alert, imperious, dominant.

The meal finished, he and Graham went out for a pipe and a stroll in the cool of the evening. Hardie looked at Jean and rose.

"Come along. You're worried; something's wrong. Tell me about it."

She shook her head, but went with him; rather, he went with her to a spot she knew, a niche among the rocks. The tide was at ebb, and the wet sands stretched out before them, aglitter in the early moonlight.

"There's nothing wrong," she said at last, to his insistence, "except that you're a blind man lost in work."

"Ah, but that's done with for the moment," he said cheerfully. "And I haven't missed seeing you, at any rate."

"Look at the moon and make a wish," she suggested, more lightly.

"A wish? A dozen wishes every one of them for the most worthwhile thing in life."

"Oh! Your iron ship, eh? Your work. The thing that means most to you—"

"No, my dear," he broke in gently. "That's not so important, believe me. It may mean fame and success, but those aren't the really important things either. I have an uncle who's able to buy and sell half of Halifax; he's the best hated and most miserable man in all Nova Scotia. He swapped all the worthwhile things for money and position, even the girl he loved. It was a good lesson to me. I wouldn't swap one kiss from the woman I love for all the golden guineas in the queen's mint!"

"Oh!" she said. "Then you're in love with someone! What's she like?"

"You."

HARDIE checked himself abruptly; rather, an angry, gusty voice silenced him. It came from around the corner of the rocks. Kinsale and old Graham came into sight, pacing along the wet sand; neither of them saw the two motionless

figures sitting against the rocks. Graham, evidently finishing some tirade, knocked out his pipe against the heel of his hand with a shower of sparks.

"I'll no' do it," he concluded gruffly. Kinsale halted.

"You'll do it, and do it sharp," he snapped, such vicious dominance in his voice that Hardie stared incredulously. "I need the money, and I mean to have it! The halfcaste, Silva, will buy your business; I've arranged it with him. There'll be enough to pay me out, and leave you sufficient to live the rest of your rum-soaked life in comfort. Never mind about Jean. She goes to England with me by the next ship. Take it and like it, and make up your mind to it, you old fool!"

Graham stood shaking with wrath. "So? Because ye've loaned me a bit o' siller now and then, ye think to own me? Arranged it, have you! And Jean goes with you? Arrgh! That's one too many, my braw kestrel! She'll not soil her pretty hands with you. She knows all about your doings wi' the lass from Port o' Spain, and the *mestiso* who kept house for you last year; aye, and the Cuban agent who dined at your table and was dead before the dawn, and not a sign of his money ever found! Yellow jack, says you, and buried him in haste. Yellow jack—a likely lie! And you so cowardly that you'd run from it, with poor folk needing your help; you'd run from it and come here, with your black coward's heart!"

"Stop it!" Kinsale stepped close to him, dark and menacing. "D'ye hear? Stop your drunken lies! You'll do as I say and that's an end to it. Fine one you are to talk, you sodden old hypocrite!"

"But I'm no dirty-handed murderer," spat out Graham. "Aye, the blacks know your secrets! They know everything, those black folk. They're afraid of you, with death in your fist, but I'm not. I've taken your orders this long while, but if ye think to lay your filthy fingers on my Jeanie, I'll say ye nay with all my heart!"

"You'll change your tune when you sober up, and this may help you," snarled Kinsale, and his fist lashed out. Old Graham staggered to the blow, and fell.

Hardie gathered his muscles, but the hand of Jean caught hard at his wrist.

"No!" she breathed. "No! For my sake, no!"

He stiffened. Kinsale looked down at Graham, laughed, and walked away. When he had passed around the point of rocks, Hardie looked sideways at the girl.

"Let me go and help him—"

"No," she broke in. "Wait."

He complied. Graham came staggering to one knee, then to his feet; he stood swaying for a moment, sobbing and gasping and whining. It was terrible to hear. Then he, too, turned about and passed from sight.

"His pride," whispered the girl. Even in the moonlight, her face was pallid and set. "If he knew we'd seen this, he'd never get over it. The one thing he has left, the little sham of pride."

"Oh!" Hardie suddenly comprehended, and marveled at her restraint, her intuition. "Good God! I never dreamed such things—about Kinsale, I mean. They're not true?"

"Quite true," she said in a lifeless voice. "More than you know."

"Hm! Come to think of it, it's a bit queer that he'd leave the island when he's so badly needed. I never gave it two thoughts. He's not a coward, surely?"

"In some ways, yes. But now you've got the whole miserable business. Father will have to give in to him; he'll do it, when sober. There's no other way. He's borrowed money from Kinsale; he's mismanaged the business lately. Silva wants to buy it and build it up again. We'll have to do it. I've had to be pleasant to Kinsale, for father's sake, to avoid a row and a scandal; a doctor gets to know a lot of things. I told you Kinsale always gets what he wants. He'd stop at nothing. And father's been no angel, as you can guess. But he's my father and I'll go all the way with him."

"You would, God bless you!" said Hardie. A slow understanding of everything crept across his mind. The terror

hidden away in the girl's heart; the queer look in her eyes; the fear of Kinsale he had divined in black Santos, and remembered now he had seen in other blacks about Kinsale's house.

One thing and another, a dozen things. How Kinsale had spoken, that day, about running away up here from the yellow fever.

"You know," he went on slowly, flexing and unflexing his hands in the moonlight, and watching them, "I've never killed a man in my life, and never expected to. Until now."

She turned abruptly to him.

"Don't be a fool! Promise me you'll do no such thing. Even poor old father could boast he had no blood on his hands. I'd not want it. I couldn't bear to think it of you. Promise me!"

"Oh! All right, I promise," said Hardie bitterly. "Mind you, I don't believe in light promises; what I agree to, I do. You've made a mistake, for I mean to take a hand in this affair."

"No, you shall not. There's nothing you can do," she rejoined, "except go away and forget all about us. We'll go back to San Sebastian tomorrow; I'll arrange it. Get yourself away and don't mix your life in our existence. It'd only ruin you. I was a silly fool ever to think—to hope anything else. Kinsale gets what he wants, always, and I can't fight off the inevitable any longer."

"Aye?" said Hardie. "Two can play at the game of getting what they want, my lass. I want you, with my whole heart and soul. Will you come to me?"

"I will not, and for your own sake," she said. "The daughter of such a father—"

"Answer enough." He rose with a lithe spring, and held out his hand to her. She took it and came to her feet. "The finest and most regal girl I ever knew before I met you," he said thoughtfully, "was a halfbreed Micmac lass in the North woods, who didn't know her own father. No one could be worse thought of, on such grounds. And what happened to her? She married the son of a lord and went back to the old country with him, and sits in a fine castle and goes to court—and deserves it all, praise God! Now get back to the house with you and leave me to think a bit. I may find some way out."

"There's none," she said. "Good-by." And she turned and walked away, her head high.

THERE was one at least, but his promise had blocked it. Striding up and down on the firm wet sand of the ebb tide, Hardie shook his head ruefully as he sucked at his pipe. He had never killed a man, but now that the time had come, he would have done so gladly. Still, that was denied him; his own promise, and the reason for it. Those gray eyes of Jean would never see him in the same light, if he killed Kinsale.

"I've been a fool!" he muttered. "Wrapped up in the work, and seeing nothing around me, or in Kinsale himself." He halted suddenly; the words of the Yankee skipper hit him between the eyes. "Such a ship would be accursed! She'd carry a curse forever after! Aye, and I believe there's truth in it. The whole idea carries a curse in it!"

He stood for a while staring out at the rippling moonlit sea, his streak of superstition all on the surface. At last he drew a deep breath, and turned back toward the house.

A figure came running, stumbling through the sand. It was Jean, all her stolidity broken. She caught at him, gasping.

"What's wrong, Jean?"

"Nothing—oh, everything! I don't know what to do; I had to tell you, warn you! I spoke with him. It's all arranged. We're to go back tomorrow. Father's asleep, and I turned in beside him, but couldn't close my eyes. He talked with Santos—"

"He? Who? Take it easy, now."

"Kinsale." She shivered a little. "I could just hear enough to frighten me; something about you not going back. And I peeped into the front room. He was mixing drinks. Do you understand? You mustn't take a drink with him! He means to leave you here!"

Hardie grunted. He could see it clear-

ly enough, yes. Leave him here, marooned. Kinsale would go with Jean, with the plans, with everything—would take ship for England and leave Glenn Hardie marooned. Food and water in plenty, but everything lost.

"Thanks." Hardie drew her to him and kissed her gently. "Now get back to your bed and let me think a while longer."

She departed, cutting across the dry sand to gain the cottage from the rear.

HARDIE stuffed his pipe and lit it, and walked on; he did not stop for any thinking, there was no more need of that. As he came to the cottage, he saw black Santos going aboard the sloop. He turned in, and enterted the lighted front room, where he and Kinsale bunked. Kinsale was seated at the table with a book, and glanced up with a smile.

"Oh, hello! Just in time to join me in a nightcap. What say?"

Hardie nodded and drew up a stool. Dr. Kinsale went to the rum-chest and set about mixing two drinks; if one was already mixed, he said nothing of it. When Kinsale set the drinks on the table and sat down, Hardie lifted his own, clinked glasses, and tasted; then he set down his glass and regarded the other man amiably.

"I fancy I have a touch of fever, Kinsale; must get you to look at me later, perhaps," he said. "First, I've something on my mind. Do you really think there's anything in the iron ship idea? In our plans?"

Kinsale regarded him, the dark eyes appraising, cautious.

"Of course I do, Hardie! What's got into you?"

Hardie shrugged. "I told you what that Yankee skipper said, before we had the row—about such a ship being accursed. Well, I've come to think there may be something in it. A curse carries. And I've come to like San Sebastian; there are reasons. I want to propose a dicker to you. Jean hinted that her father owed you some money he can't pay—quite a bit."

He spoke slowly, carefully, and now paused, rubbing his chin. He seemed quite unaware of Kinsale's piercing gaze, yet he could guess at every thought behind those magnetic eyes.

"Yes?" said Kinsale warily.

"Well, it's like this," resumed Hardie in his awkward way. "Suppose you made over the debt to me, in return for my half interest in the ship plans, if you feel like a gamble. I'll throw up the idea definitely. I don't like that curse, for a fact!"

Kinsale caught his breath slightly. "You mean, you'd sell me your half of the whole thing for a debt that can't be paid out?"

"Yes, if you put it that way. I thought I might work it out with Graham, take on a job with him, in the business. Haven't figured it out exactly. What do you say?"

Kinsale lifted his drink and sipped, trying to conceal his eagerness.

"Why," he rejoined, "of course! But you'd be very foolish to do that; I'd hate to take advantage of you. The amount I've loaned Graham comes to quite a bit, but there's no chance of his paying it out unless he sells his business."

The voice was calm, but not the eyes. They were breath-taking. Hardie smiled.

"Never mind arguments. Yes or no, on the nail! Agree, and write it out and sign, here and now."

Kinsale rose. "Very well. But mind, in the morning we'll tear up the agreement if you've changed your mind."

He got paper and pen and settled down to write, hardly able to conceal the haste of his fingers. Hardie lifted the glass to his lips, wet them, set it down.

"Never mind specifying the amount of the loans," he said carelessly. "Just make it all sums owed you by Graham."

Kinsale nodded and scribbled faster. When he had finished, he signed the paper and Hardie took it, examined it carefully, passed it back.

"Seems all shipshape. Make your copy, and I'll sign."

"You make it." Kinsale handed him the pen. "If you stick to it, the holograph will stand in lieu of witnesses.

For your own sake, I hope you don't stick to it. I've counted a lot on our pushing this thing through together—"

Hardie ignored the words and wrote. When he had finished, he signed and handed over the paper. That which Kinsale had drawn up, he pocketed. Then, reaching out, he changed glass for glass, and lifted his own.

"Drink to it, and good luck!"

"Eh? Why change the glasses?" Kinsale shook his head. "I can't drink from your glass, if you've a touch of fever!"

Hardie burst out laughing, set his glass aside, and rose.

"Come on outside," he said, jerking his head toward the door. "Something I want to say; we don't want to wake 'em up in there."

Mystified, frowning, black eyes uneasy, Dr. Kinsale followed him out. They stepped out into the white sand and the moonlight, and Hardie turned.

"Not a bad idea," he said. "Leave me marooned; old Graham ignorant of the bargain, so you could force him into the sale with Silva; keep him under your thumb, and walk off with the ship plans. Eat your cake and have it too, eh?"

"What d'you mean?" snapped Kinsale, and reached for his pocket.

Hardie's first reached him first, and when it came to fists, Glenn Hardie knew exactly what he was about.

Kinsale fought. He shouted to Santos for help; he got a vicious little knife out of his pocket; he battled like a maniac. None of it did him the least good. He was battered away from the cottage down toward the wet sands. He was knocked down time and again, and kicked to his feet.

When black Santos at last came running, Kinsale was sprawled out, a bleeding, inert mass, little more than breathing.

Hardie turned to the staring, helpless black.

"Take him aboard and go back home —now. At San Sebastian, tell somebody to come over and pick us up in a day or two. No hurry. Hold on! I'll give you something to take with him; everything must be shipshape."

He strode back into the cottage. Jean was there, wide-eyed. Hardie got the portfolio of plans and strode back. He gave the portfolio to Santos.

"All right. Now off with him."

He stood watching, until the white canvas of the sloop lifted and filled in the moonlight, and she stood away. Then he walked down to the incoming tide and stooped, washing his darkened hands carefully.

Another look at the lessening canvas, and he turned to find Jean approaching from the cottage.

"What have you done?" she demanded, breathless. "Why did he shout? What have you done?"

Hardie put out his hands to her, drew her close, and looked into her face.

"My dear," he said, "I've just made a trade, the best trade I'll ever make in my life! I've swapped all the things that don't matter, for the really important ones; and it's done beyond any recall, so you can't protest or argue. Just give me a kiss, the kind you're dying to give me, and then we'll talk about setting your father's business on its feet!"

And the little ripples of the incoming tide laughed along the shore.

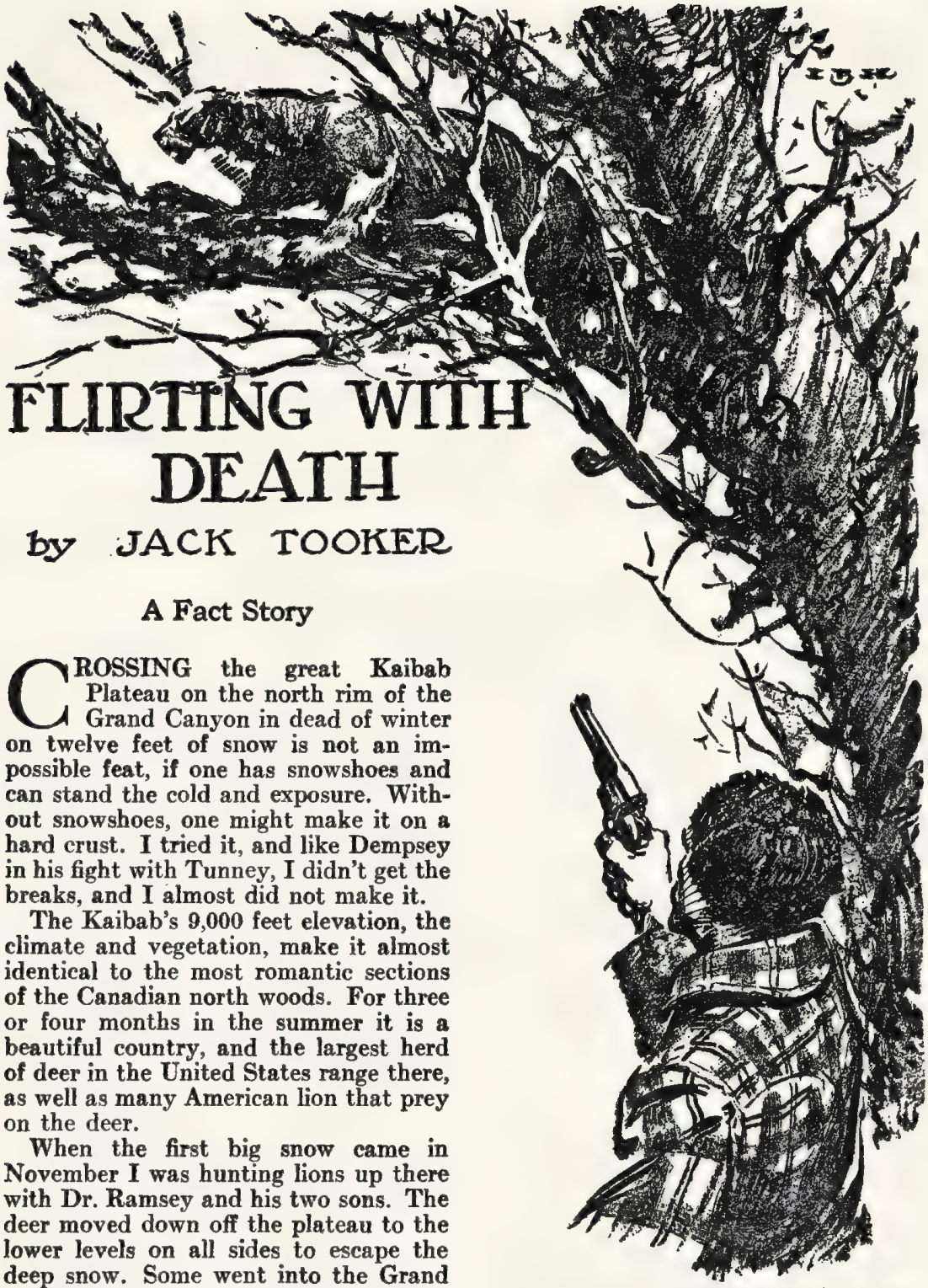
SO THERE was the story that lay in the old, old letters given me by the cigarette girl. I went over it with her, when I returned the letters, and she looked at me with shining eyes—eyes like those of Jean Graham, for their gray changed from light to dark.

"Oh! I knew you'd understand it, you'd get what was back of it!" she broke out eagerly. "There was another letter, but I haven't been able to find it, anywhere. A letter that told about the two of them—after old Graham was dead, and they sold out and came up to New England!"

"But none of them tell what became of Kinsale," I said. She shook her head.

"I know already; anyone would know. Just what happens to everyone who swaps the really important things for those that glitter."

I fear she was right. Iron ships made plenty of money in those days.



FLIRTING WITH DEATH

by JACK TOOKER

A Fact Story

CROSSING the great Kaibab Plateau on the north rim of the Grand Canyon in dead of winter on twelve feet of snow is not an impossible feat, if one has snowshoes and can stand the cold and exposure. Without snowshoes, one might make it on a hard crust. I tried it, and like Dempsey in his fight with Tunney, I didn't get the breaks, and I almost did not make it.

The Kaibab's 9,000 feet elevation, the climate and vegetation, make it almost identical to the most romantic sections of the Canadian north woods. For three or four months in the summer it is a beautiful country, and the largest herd of deer in the United States range there, as well as many American lion that prey on the deer.

When the first big snow came in November I was hunting lions up there with Dr. Ramsey and his two sons. The deer moved down off the plateau to the lower levels on all sides to escape the deep snow. Some went into the Grand Canyon, while others moved north into the low cedar brakes, The lions followed them, as they always do. Snow made hunting easy, and we had taken four lions when it became so deep that the deer yarded up under the thick cedars to browse. There was no feed for our horses, so we rode into the little Mormon town of Fredonia and put up with my old friend, Scotty Dunham.

A big tom lion . . . about thirty feet above me . . .

It continued to snow until hunting was almost impossible, and after waiting a week for the weather to break, my party

decided that four lions were enough for one year. So I packed them out to Cedar City, where they took the Salt Lake Short Line for New York. Back at Scotty's, we played cards and did just about any and everything to pass the time.

I was to meet a party at the village of Grand Canyon, which is on the south rim, March 1st, and show them the canyon, after which I was to accompany them around by rail to Lind or Cedar City, Utah, where Scotty would meet us on March 6th for a lion hunt. The snow would be gone then on the lower levels and hunting at its best.

By January 2nd I ran out of things to do. It was more than a thousand miles around by rail to the south rim of the Grand Canyon, and only about a hundred miles across the shortest way—forty miles to the north rim, thirty miles by trail across the canyon to the old William Bass camp, and twenty-five miles from there to my home at Grand Canyon Village. The longer route was the safest and logical way to go, since at that time of year there would be at least ten feet of snow on the level in the Kaibab Forest. I had made the trip on snowshoes, but had not used snowshoes in several months and I always have to break them in.

We had been having some twenty below zero weather, and Scotty agreed that I could cross over on the crust without snowshoes. I hadn't planned on taking my dogs, whichever way I went, but we no sooner began talking about the trip when old Red, my lead dog, began to get restless. He would come to me and lay his head in my lap and look into my face with those big, sad eyes. He seemed to know that I planned on leaving without him.

Finally I decided to attempt to cross the canyon on foot. I patted old Red's head and told him he could go along, and he seemed to understand every word I said, for he voiced his appreciation with one of those barks that could be heard on a still day for two miles.

The next morning it was still cold and there was a crust on the snow that would almost support a cow. My clothing was new and warm: a fur-lined wool cap with ear flaps; two suits of light wool underwear, which are warmer than one heavy suit; a heavy wool shirt; a mackinaw and heavy, all-wool pants. Two pair of wool socks filled up a new pair of army shoes half a size too large. I carried no bedding, just an army knapsack with two extra pairs of socks, gloves and a large supply of dried venison, some bread and crackers, three cans of fruit, coffee and salt. I figured on sufficient food to last the dog and me a week. I had plenty of matches.

I left Scotty's place about an hour after sun-up. My only weapons were a pocket knife, light belt ax and a .38 Smith & Wesson heavy duty six-shooter. Even down in the valley the snow was in most places above the few fences to be seen. The crust on the snow was so hard that we made no tracks. Cutting across country, I headed straight for the big saddle which connects Powell Plateau with the main Kaibab Plateau.

Going was good and we soon began to climb. About noon we reached the cedar brakes, began to see deer and in a short time found many of them yarded up under low spreading pinion and cedar trees, where they could eat snow and browse on the trees. Signs of lions were everywhere. I saw kill after kill made by lions, and in many cases they had been made when the snow was soft. The whole gory story was written and frozen in the snow.

I carried a short piece of quarter inch rope which I soon had to tie into old Red's collar as a leash to keep him from taking a fresh lion track.

We kept climbing, with an occasional time out for rest and a cigarette. There is a lot of energy stored up in dried venison, and whenever I felt hungry I chewed a short strip of the savory meat and threw some to the dog, without stopping. About sundown I began looking for a place to camp—a cave, shelf rocks or a windfall. There was fuel everywhere—dead trees sticking out of the snow, dry limbs high on the base of pine, spruce and fir trees.

It was dusk when I found a good place, a shelf rock extending far out

over a ledge and a shallow cave in the ledge. There were no crevices or small holes in the back of the cave, so I was sure our sleep would not be disturbed by any rats or other small rodents. I soon had wood enough to last a week and a good warm fire going.

Meanwhile, Red was investigating. Back under the ledge there was a narrow strip of dust in which were several old lion tracks, and a few places where lions had covered up their signs as cats do.

I opened and ate a can of peaches, using the can as a coffee pot and cup. While the snow was melting for coffee, I took in the surrounding country. I could look back over the forest covered foothills, clear down into the lower, more level country. The snow was at least ten feet deep here, and as far as the eye could see there was snow. Below, I knew there was plenty of wild life, but up here I did not seen even a bird.

The coffee was about all I wanted for supper. The quart of fruit had just about filled me up. Too much fruit for one meal, but it was either eat it or throw it away, since I had no dishes, and I wasn't throwing anything eatable away. It was about twenty-two miles back to Scotty's place by the nearest forest service road, which would be open only about three months during the summer, but straight across, the way the dog and I had come, it was not more than sixteen miles.

Cutting fir boughs, I made a bed for the dog as well as myself and fixed the fire near the mouth of the cave to last all night. Then I crawled in on the strong and sweetly scented bed and was soon sound asleep.

IT turned warmer during the night, for when I awoke about daylight, the fire had burned down, yet I was still comfortable. A few dry twigs on the smoldering coals soon brought the fire to life. A fruit can of melted snow near the fire had not frozen. I made coffee and cooked breakfast. Coffee, a few strips of broiled meat and toast for myself and Red, and I swung my light pack to my shoulders and we were off.

By this time I was keenly aware that the air was much warmer, yet the snow crust had not softened at that early hour, and I hoped at least to reach a point where I could see Grand Canyon before the going grew more difficult.

We were soon up on the wind-swept hogbacks or ridges, but there was no wind, and we were still on the northern slopes when Old Red picked up a track. I could not see a sign of a track, but that was to be expected, for I could not see our own tracks, the snow crust was so hard.

Curiosity led me to let the dog work the trail. I was sure there could be no lion up here, and I wanted to see what animal had been as rash as I. Red was eager to be off, and he soon followed the trail out of sight. I reached the top of the ridge just in time to hear Red jump something in the head of the next canyon. The race had really begun. Red was running as he had run deer in his puppyhood. His barking was choppy like a cur dog's. But in a few minutes the note changed to that most welcome of all dog music to the hunter, the tree bark.

It took me all of an hour to cross a little canyon between me and the dog. Several times, on the way, I broke through the crust, but found another thin crust of hard snow about eight inches below the surface. In my excitement to see what the dog had treed, I thought little of it, however, and finally I reached the tree, and there on a limb sat a big tom lion about thirty feet above me.

I took careful aim at the side of his head and when the little .38 spoke, down came the lion with a bullet hole about halfway between the eye and ear on the left side of the head.

I was wet through with perspiration after the stiff run, and taking off my mackinaw, I leisurely skinned out the old lion, wondering the while what possessed such a wise old cat to cross over the deep snow. I decided there were but two explanations. Lions will often trail a man. That lion had either been trailing me, or he had got to thinking of an old sweetheart left in Grand Canyon the past fall. Lions have no more sense than men when it comes to the female of the species.

By the time I had skinned the lion and sliced off a few steaks for Red, it was nearly noon.

I had been working in the shade and did not realize that the sun was hot and that the reflection of it on the snow was blinding. But when I stepped out into the sunlight, where the rays had been at work on the snow, I was surprised to find the crust rotten. About every step, I broke through to the thin crust below. I knew at once that our travels for that day were at an end.

I would have given anything to have been able to get back to our camp site of the night before, but that was impossible, for we had come about six miles due south, which, fortunately, was in the direction we wished to go. Directly below us was the rocky ledge where Red had found the lion, and knowing that lions are good judges of protected spots in which to lie up during the day, I tied the rope to the lion skin and started to investigate. I floundered about, keeping in shaded spots as much as possible, where the crust would still bear my weight.

I finally reached the head of the little canyon and the ledge, and to my surprise and joy, found a fine place to camp under a ledge where it was dry. I prepared for an indefinite stay and sat down to reflect on the folly that had placed me in this perilous position.

I could remember many January thaws. In fact, I could not recall a single year of my thirty years in that country when there had not been a warm spell and a thaw sometime during January. Well, there was no use crying about this one. I was forty miles from nowhere, in the middle of a jam that might easily end with my bones bleaching here sometime the next summer. And all I could do was wait for a cold snap or invent some way to get out without trying to wade ten or twelve feet of snow. I berated myself now for not bringing my snowshoes, for they had not been very heavy and I was strong.

I blackened my nose and cheeks to dim the sun's reflection and relieve eye strain, and resolved not to worry or lose sleep. If I was to die I wanted to do it as painlessly as possible.

IT occurred to me that the temperature would surely fall to freezing at night, and I might be able to travel after dark. I was partly right; it did freeze that first night, but not hard enough to carry a two hundred pound man. About ten thirty I started out and was at least an hour getting back up to where the dead lion lay, where I gave up and returned to camp, taking the lion's carcass with me. My limited food supply was about gone, and when I sliced off lion steaks for the dog I broiled and ate a few cuts myself. It was not bad.

The warm spell lasted so long that I began to think we were having an early summer, and knowing it would take at least a month for the snow to go off, I began to do some thinking as to ways and means of lasting that long. I thought of sky hooks and flying machines, and ended up with the more practical idea of making a pair of snowshoes.

It was a real problem, finding the material. The moment I got out on twelve feet of snow I was in danger of sinking to the bottom, when I would have considerable difficulty getting out and might suffocate before I did. I finally was able to make fairly safe progress by crawling and rolling along, and at last found two oak limbs which I thought might do for the outside or hoop of the snowshoes. I bent them into shape of snowshoes and cut strips and strings from the lion skin with which to weave the webs of the shoes. I tied the ends of the strings in such a way that the slack could be taken up later, for the fresh hide would stretch when it got wet.

I was all one day and part of a night getting those improvised snowshoes to function at all efficiently. Finally, I split the lion's tail and used the long straps to tie the shoes to my feet. After that I had to cut a barked limb with many small branches to be used as a sled on which to transport old Red, for the snow was so soft that it would not carry his weight. At last, we were packed and ready.

The next morning at daylight we struck out on a struggle for our lives.

The going was good enough for about a mile, when I had to stop and take up the slack in the rawhide strings of my shoes. It was then I noticed that even when tight, there was too much sag in the snowshoes. I had never studied a pair of them with the idea of going into the manufacturing business. After much tedious labor and experiment, I recalled that snowshoes have cross pieces of wood, so I selected some oak sticks, sat down on the limb of an old yellow pine tree which no doubt was actually fourteen feet from the ground, and fitted in the cross pieces. After that my snowshoe troubles were over and we made good time, considering that we were climbing continually, and I had to pull the improvised sled.

About noon we reached the divide—and such a view! The south wall of Grand Canyon was in plain sight at some points, and we could look across the canyon and locate Williams and Flagstaff by the smoke from the chimneys. And Flagstaff, at least, was nearly a hundred miles away. We were looking right into the eyes of civilization, where there were friends, food and everything that man could desire, but we might as well have been in another world. We were by no means out of danger, and if we lost our heads, some one might be lucky enough, or unlucky enough, to find our bones during the next year or so.

IT was still some fifteen miles to the north rim, and at the bottom of the canyon the Colorado River to cross. And after crossing the river and climbing out on the south rim, we would still be twenty-five miles from my home in the village of Grand Canyon.

This was one time in my life when I was unquestionably the boss. Red couldn't argue. He lay on the brush sled and rode as if his life depended on it. When I stopped to rest he would sit up and whine, trying to express his appreciation of my efforts to save him from this dangerous field of snow. Only once did he get off the sled, and then he went down almost beyond my reach.

After we could see our destination, the going was easier, since we were traveling downhill. I kept on till late in the hope of reaching the north rim before darkness fell, but failed to make it. We camped at a windfall, and that night was the worst of all. The wind came up in a gale, and I was now out of everything except salt and a few lion steaks, which I shared with my dog.

The next morning, about an hour after sun-up, I staggered out on the rim at the head of the old Shinimo Trail, built by W. W. Bass. Never did the canyon look more inviting to me, but we did not stop to enjoy the scenery. What looked best to me was old Mother Earth and the bare rocks not more than 3,000 feet down into the canyon. I just fell off over the edge, so anxious was I to be out of that snow. Red, on his old brush sled, tumbled down on me, and my feet went up into the air, and we rolled for a hundred feet or more, when we came up short in a snow drift. Right there is where I left the sled. I tied the little rope into Red's collar, and when he sank in the snow I pulled him out again. I walked, slid and floundered through the snow, and when my feet struck solid ground now and then it was a real thrill.

At the snow's edge were deer, mountain sheep, wild horses and lions. I killed a deer and camped, had a feast of venison, and next day discarded the snowshoes. About noon I reached the old Bass tramway and looked out on the swollen Colorado River. There was a small strand of cable spanning the four hundred foot gorge at this point, hidden in the crevices of the granite wall. I found two small pulleys also. But I needed more rope than the twelve feet of old cotton rope I had on Red. There were the two strips of the lion's tail I had used as snow shoe straps.

The tramway spanning the river was old and shaky and had not been used for a long time. I would need a secure hookup to the pulleys. The strips of lion tail had stretched to nearly twice their original length. These and the rope would hold me, and Red might be able to swim the river. The old fellow seemed to sense my thoughts, for he looked up at me, pleading as only a dog can plead. He

wanted me to take him on the cable. I couldn't blame him, for that river was a raging torrent—logs, tree stumps and all manner of debris whirling along on the surface at fully twenty miles an hour. So I decided to chance taking Red with me on the cable.

Taking off my mackinaw, I cut holes in the back of it, placed the dog's front feet through the sleeves and the hind legs through the holes, wrapped the coat around him and tied it, fastening one end to the pulley. Then I tied the two strips of lion's tail together, made a loop under my arms and tied it to another pulley. In a moment we were off over the rushing river, Red ahead. The skin rope holding me to the pulley stretched until I reached up and grasped the cable, fearing it would break, but it held. Out about the center of the river the cable sagged and our progress was retarded. From that point on I had to shove the dog ahead of me and pull myself.

I thought of many things while dangling fifty feet above that mill-race of water on the skin from a lion's tail. If the skin parted and I was not injured in the fall, I might swim out safely, provided I could get out of my clothes. The Colorado River never gives up its dead, and no man can swim it with his clothes on; the sediment settles in the clothing and sinks him, no matter how good a swimmer he may be. But we made it, and we were just about the happiest pair of wanderers alive. Old Red ran up and down the shore line and played like a puppy.

I still had some of the lion and the meat of one ham from the deer, and we ate our fill, but I missed my coffee and tobacco. Lack of proper food and hardship had taken a lot out of me, and it took me two hours longer than usual to climb out on the south rim. The William Bass camp was deserted, but there were supplies. Flour, potatoes, onions, bacon and several sacks of Bull Durham tobacco were very welcome. Mr. Bass had not been there for several days, and I knew he would be back soon, but did not wait.

Next morning I struck out in about a foot of snow for the Supai Grand Canyon mail trail. I knew by the tracks in the snow that the mail man had not been along yet, so I walked on to keep warm.

About noon, the mail carrier overtook me in a buckboard, and late that afternoon I reached home, after flirting with death for twenty-six days. I had lost twelve pounds, and considered myself fortunate to have survived.

No one at Grand Canyon village had known that I had attempted the trip. Scotty Dunham had not notified any one until the day before I arrived, so the worry had all been mine—twenty-six days of it that I shall never forget.

THE CAMP-FIRE

Where readers, writers and adventurers meet

IT HAS been a number of moons since we've introduced new members of the Writers' Brigade. This time we have a parade of them past the Camp-Fire.

We'll give first place to Frank Gruber, because he wrote *Peace Marshal,* the serial beginning in this issue. We may say, in an aside, that we have noticed one peculiarity of this man—no matter what subject he begins to talk about, weather or politics, he always ends by talking about Jesse James.

Away back in 1914, this narrator came into possession of a paper-bound book, entitled, *Luke Walton, The Chicago Newsboy.* The book made a profound impression on me because I lived at the time in Chicago and I, too, was a newsboy. By devious means, I accumulated over a period of time quite a few Horatio Alger books. Did they instill in me a burning ambition to marry the boss' daughter and become a wealthy lawyer, broker or merchant? No, I did not want to follow in the footsteps of Mr. Alger's heroes. I wanted to step into Mr. Alger's own shoes; I wanted to write the kind of books he had written. I did. I wrote hundreds of thousands of words before I was fourteen. But nothing happened.

Ambition became dormant. Other things happened. In 1920 I said goodbye (by postcard) to the family and enlisted in the Army. I served a year in the 32nd Infantry, at the Presidio of San Francisco.

The memory of my postcard farewell was still too fresh when I was discharged from the Army in the summer of 1921, at the age of seventeen, so I headed for Minnesota. I came to know all the pawnshops on Superior Street, in Duluth, and finally signed up for a job as cookee and camp flunky in a road construction camp, near Nashwauk, up on the Iron Range. I only had to work fourteen hours a day, and the pay was $40.00 a month. It would have been if I'd lasted a month. But after eleven days I came to the conclusion that an ex-service "man" owed it to his family to return to his family. . . .

In 1921, with a minor depression going on, I lined up another chap and we went to see what there was in this hoboing business. We rode box cars, gondolas, refrigerator cars, blinds and the rods. It was a cold winter. Returned to Chicago and got to know the Madison Street missions quite well.

Was bell hop, elevator operator, order-picker at Sears Roebuck, factory hand and office clerk. Three-four years. In 1927, I finally sold a juvenile story for the amazing price of $3.50 and was so inspired by this Algerian success that I quit whatever job I had at the time and got one as an editor of a turkey paper. During the next few years I

edited various class and business magazines.

Came the depression and went the business papers. In 1934 I found myself editing a salesman's magazine. One day I chucked the job to become a writer. Tough times, but finally made the grade. Have appeared in over forty different magazines.

Away back in 1920, I saw Navajo Indians do the war dance for nickels tossed by tourists; at the mature age of 17 I ran the scale with a pair of dice for a bunch of cowboys. Consequently, the West made no favorable impression on me. But one time, several years later, I happened to be in Northfield, Minnesota and a native showed me a few bullet holes made by Jesse James and his boys back in 1876. I'd read a hundred of the old paperback thrillers as a kid, but had never thought of Jesse James as any more of a real personage than Deadwood Dick or Old King Brady.

Now, interest was suddenly aroused. In the ensuing years I made an exhaustive study of the life of Jesse James. I've gone to the places he went; I've talked to relatives and men who knew him. I've visited at his old home near Kearney, Missouri.

My study of Jesse James naturally led me to other outlaws and gunfighters. I've accumulated an extensive library of western fact books and biographies. Some of these have been many years out of print and come under the heading of "Rare Americana."

Being a writer I can come and go as I please. I make periodical trips to the West; I spend hours and days talking to oldsters of from 80 to 90, who were there "when", who knew "them".

Before I wrote *Peace Marshal* I worked through Kansas; visiting the old trail towns. Broken Lance, the setting for *Peace Marshal*, is a fictitious town, but it's representative of Dodge City, Wichita, Ellsworth and Abilene. There's a little of Wyatt Earp, Bat Masterson, Billy Tilghman and Wild Bill Hickok, in the character of John Bonniwell. Some of the other characters in the story had their real-life counterparts in Dave Rudabaugh, John Wesley Hardin, Ben Thompson, Clay Allison and Doc Holliday.

I'm keen on the subject of gunfighters and bad-men. To get me started you've only to say that Billy the Kid was a more formidable gunfighter than Jesse James. The Kid's fighting career lasted three or four years; there are only one or two authenticated records where he stood up and fought a determined man. Jesse James was an outlaw for sixteen long years. He rode and fought with the most desperate men of his time. He was in Dodge City for a short time during the hey-day of Wyatt Earp and Bat Masterson. They knew him and made no attempt to collect the huge rewards that were offered for him. Wild Bill Hickok knew Jesse James and walked softly when he was about. . . .

WE'VE collected the following information about the writer of our off-the-trail story with the odd title, *You Take Michaelangelo* — Paul O'Neil. Though not certain, we think this is the first story of his to be published. It struck us, and it may strike you, that it is an excellent beginning.

Paul O'Neil is 28 years old, stands six feet one inch high, and has long legs with which he won a varsity letter as a hurdler at the University of Washington where a kindly board of regents award "W's" for second places. Steve Anderson, his running mate, held the world record and tied it every Saturday. O'Neil almost graduated with the class of 1932, but quit in his senior year to write sports for the *Seattle Star*. Two years later he went to the *Seattle Times* where he has since covered general news including the Weyerhauser kidnapping, the Bremerton Mass Murder, odd interviews and other items of interest.

O'Neil walked 50 miles in 48 hours in rain, snow and mud in the Cascade Mountains when Jay Graybill, Seattle flyer, crashed his plane in the peaks trying to drop food to an isolated mine. No log walker, he fell off one crossing over the Lennox River with the only pictures of the wreck, but was swept out of the water by an eddy. He walked back with the story, the plates, which were still intact despite their wetting, and a cold. This has been his only "beat" and he is still talking about it.

He was born in Seattle and has traveled as far north as Seward, Alaska, as a member of the crew of the Steamship *Yukon*. He has gone also to the Far East. This occurred aboard the battleship *Tennessee* to which he was assigned to write features on a cruise following maneuvers.

FROM the Northwest, which shares with the Southwest the honors for producing more writers than any other sections of our country, comes also Bob Emahiser, author of *Blue Desert*. He gives us, briefly, this information:

I'm 36, married and no children. My wife is a professional radio worker. She sings, acts, etc. . . . I've done newspaper work in the Northwest for 13 years, attended Stanford University and have been attempting to write fiction for the past five years. I think

I've sold about twenty short stories and articles. I was a blond until a year in a TB sanatorium (1936-37) turned my hair grey and I'm just about as homely as they come.

NEXT we have Warren F. Robinson, who lives mostly in a trailer and has no permanent address with us, but a forwarding address. He wrote *The Wet-Eared Pup.*

Taking a place by *Adventure's* Camp-fire is the realization of a boyhood dream for me. Wrote my first story as soon as I could spell a big word or two. Started reading *Adventure* not long afterwards. Born in New Bedford of Scotch-Irish and English ancestry, most of my youthful spare hours were spent either haunting the wharves of what was once the busiest whaling port of the world or sailing my own small boat in surrounding waters of the harbor and bay. At a tender age I formed the habit of earnestly questioning every seaman who crossed my path. From men who've "been there" I learned much about clippers, coasters, whalers, and sundry other craft. Had a taste for Conrad, Melville, Dana and every other able writer of the sea. Anything from salt water be it a bit of used cordage or a rotting hulk gripped my imagination.

My first story published was a juvenile short while at college followed by many others and by several adventure books. Have had a taste of several types of work from digging ditches in zero weather to managing an office. Have even lectured on whaling and daubed oil paintings of the sea. Entering the realities of a depression-sick world after the idealism of a campus was no joke but I played the game. At thirty-three I am proud of a charming and intelligent wife who has been beside me through the bumps and a six year old son who informs me that he expects to become a G-man.

A couple of years ago I built my own house-trailer and we roamed from Maine to Florida and back. While at Savannah I was intrigued by the lines of a gray tramp steamer and the talk of a member of the crew. At long last I worked that incident into a story —*The Wet-eared Pup.* By the time this appears in print we plan to be following the coast-line again in search of more ships and seamen, gulls, and breezes with the true salt tang. . . .

WE'VE heard before from Jack Tooker—he wrote *Photographing a Mountain Lion* for us—but for those who may have forgotten, he was formerly predatory animal killer for the Grand Canyon National Park. He is noted as a mountain lion hunter—he has roped 52 of them, and the last total we have from him on lions killed or taken alive, is 308.

A GOOD letter comes from Infantry Colonel George Chase Lewis, Overseas Discharge and Replacement Depot, Brooklyn, N. Y. Though he takes us to task, his remarks about the Philippines seem very much to the point.

I read with much interest the article "Close to Death" by Major Calvin Brooks Carter, in the December 1938, issue of *Adventure.*

I served two tours of duty in Mindanao in 1908 on Lake Lanao and in 1917 at Parang-Parang and Cotabato. I knew personally most of the characters given in this account. I have talked several times with vice governor Juan Bayot, the victim of the Moro massacre and with the villain of the drama, Dato Santiago, though I had not seen them for several years prior to the tragedy. This episode illustrates the basic clash of temperament and racial antagonism between Moslem, Moro and Christian Filipino. Had there been an American officer present at Bagusan, to restrain the Filipino assertiveness and tactfully to salve the fierce Moro pride, it is highly improbable that this massacre would have occurred. I have hunted and marched over that country with Major Carter (then Captain of Constabulary and Governor of Cotabato) in 1917, some seven years before the events in the article, when I commanded a scout battalion at Parang-Parang. He was a man of determination and tact who dominated the Moros by firmness, fair play, and force. The well nigh fatal result of Major Fletcher's thoughtless rush to the launch illustrates strikingly the savage mercurial character of the Moros and the need of thorough knowledge of their tribal traits in dealing with them.

This fiery Moro character is a factor which must be definitely reckoned with in any plans for future Philippine Independence. Japan already has a large settlement in Davao in Mindanao. If and when Japan desires a plausible basis for intervention in the affairs of an independent Philippines, the racial explosive is ready to her hand in the Moro dato's pride of race. Any Japanese enthusiast willing to risk the equivalent of hari-kari at the hands of Moro fanatics in the interest of what he considers honorable service to his Mikado, can precipitate a first class local war on an hour's notice by affronting a Moro noble or making small advances to high class Moro women which would not be resented

in western society. Plausible grounds for armed intervention or protection of Japanese citizens could be secured as desired.

I regret that your artist has contributed the only fantastic unreal note to Major Carter's fine story. If that picture ever reaches Mindanao, there will be a unanimous black toothed grin of derision on every Moro's face who sees Moro warriors depicted wielding 16 or 20 inch Kris and borong blades "woman fashion," with the blade at the little finger side of the fist. I have seen thousands of Moros using bolos, kris and borongs at work, exercise, and demonstration and some of them in real combat and I have yet to see or to hear of a warrior grasping his blade as shown by your illustrator. Kris play to a Moro is a deadly serious affair on which his life and family may depend. He studies and practices kris and borong play and fencing as faithfully as the nobles of the court of Versailles. He uses his bolo or some similar blade almost every hour of the day to cut the grass, bejuco, and bamboo to build or repair his house, cut trail through Cogon grass or jungle, build fish traps, gather crops, etc. He has to use his blade in the most effective fashion or starve or die in combat. He learned since childhood that the only effective way to grip a knife blade is with the blade on the thumb side of the fist.

Without regard to these reasons, logical though they may be, the cold fact is that the Moro, Tagalog, Mexican and every bolo and machete wielder in the tropics always uses the sword grip and never the stiletto grip that your artist presents.

There appears to be a sort of cult or tradition among illustrators to always present bowie, knives, bolos and krises with the stiletto grip and to show policemen, frontiersmen, and gangsters holding modern revolvers and automatics by the barrel and striking with the reversed pistol butt. Striking with the pistol butt went out of usage in actual combat with he introduction of the light barreled heavy-cylindered revolver between the Mexican War and the Civil War periods. The old single shot muzzle loading long barreled horse pistol made an ideal club when it was seized by the muzzle. All the weight was in the lock and butt and the barrel was thin, light and as large as a shotgun and gave a good grasp for the hand and there was little or no front sight to tear the palm.

For years artists correctly portrayed the clubbed pistol in combat. The introduction of the revolver altered the picture entirely. The revolver has a relatively heavy barrel of small diameter with a very high knife like front sight. The barrel does not give a good grasp, the front sight hurts the hand, and there is always the possibility that the enemy may grasp the handle of the revolver or automatic and find himself in control of the trigger and shooting mechanism, of a still loaded and functioning weapon.

Striking with the butt of an automatic pistol is specially dangerous, as it is very prone to release the magazine spring and to send the clip of cartridges onto the ground. Retaining the grip on the butt enables a heavy blow to be struck with the barrel and still to keep control of the firing mechanism in case of necessity for fire action.

If *Adventure* can curb the imagination of its illustrators on these two points, it will materially boost its prestige with men who really have had experience and observation of bolos and pistols in action and will give its reader a true picture of combat details.

Please let me have Major Carter's present address.

WE'LL plead guilty to occasional confusion between the sword and stiletto grips, and say some words on the subject to our artists. We think our errors in this respect have been very few, because we have been aware of the differences of the grips; but hereafter we want none of them.

On the other score, that of holding the pistol by the barrel, we plead not guilty, with emphasis. For a long time we kept a gun in the office for the benefit of artists making this error. We'd make them go through the motion of striking us with the gun held by the barrel; then we'd do the natural thing that Colonel Lewis suggests—grab the gun by the butt and put a finger on the trigger. This always leaves the muzzle pointing at an artist's throat or face, and we have yet to see the artist who didn't look startled and impressed, or who made the same mistake again.

There have been repercussions elsewhere. Twice artists have told us ruefully that they've run into trouble subsequently by submitting drawings in which the pistols were held in the correct striking position, and have been ordered to change them around so the pistols were held by the barrel!

H. B.

ASK ADVENTURE

Information you can't get elsewhere

GOOD adventuring—and safe passage.

Request:—My wife and I are readying a thirty-six foot yawl for a trip around the world in 1940. It is to be a leisurely excursion and we want to be as self-sufficient as possible with the limited space at our disposal.

We must have a radio, short wave receiver and some sort of sending apparatus for emergencies. My question is this: Is there on the market an extremely compact and virtually fool-proof transmitter (phone) that can be operated by a dub with reasonable success? We are delaying selection of a power plant until we settle the radio problem. We also will run lights, ice-box, etc., from the plant. The receiver will be most important and should be relatively inexpensive as our allotment for radio isn't high. Short wave only and a relatively simple hook-up with spares for parts most likely to give way. The transmitter I haven't the foggiest notion about, except that it must be easily operated. .

I suppose I could get this information from manufacturers but I wanted to get the advice of an independent expert before I start to dicker. We are now operating a small coasting schooner but it isn't suitable for a long and comfortable trip so we are planning the construction of a new hull, including all the things we have always wanted in a boat. Have contacted a friend or two (radio experts) on the subject but they are such rabid hams that if I followed their suggestions the radio would fill the entire cabin!

—T. O'Neil Loughan, Puerto Rico

Reply by Mr. Donald McNicol:—I envy you your prospective round-the-world trip. You can purchase phone transmitting outfit for as low as $35 complete. The set they now make for automobiles is efficient and inexpensive. I presume you will have 110-V a.c. supply aboard. A.C. generators are smaller than D.C. There is a 5-meter, (60 megacycle) set that works on 110 a.c., or 6 volt d.c. You might write Wholesale Radio Service Co., 100 6th Ave., New York for circular on their W21940 transmitter. It lists $26.00 without microphone and antenna. You could ask them which type of mike they recommend for the set, and price. You do not need a long range outfit. You should have a good receiver. For 110-V a.c., use the above company has a nice set at $29.50. Their W21062.

A CANDID shot from a balloon.

Request:—I want to take pictures of a certain mountainous area on an island about a thousand miles from mainland. As I can't afford to hire a plane to make the trip, will have to go by boat and try to take the pictures by using either a balloon or large box kite.

Not knowing how high a kite or balloon will have to go in order to get the pictures, how can I focus the camera? I intend to use a Compur with extra long bellows and a telephoto lens.

Would it be advisable for me to use film pack and develop each shot as I take it?

Some of the cliffs are almost impossible to climb yet I want to find out from pictures if it would be worth while to climb while I'm still on the island.

As it is located in a tropical climate would like some advice on the type of films to use. Would a magnesium flare used at night make a better picture than natural light?

—Perry Powers, Los Angeles, Calif.

Reply by Mr. Paul L. Anderson:—You will do much better to use small gas balloons for your proposed work, rather than box kites; the latter are too uncertain and difficult to control. If you will write to the United States Weather Bureau, Washington, D. C., they can tell you where to get, at comparatively slight expense, balloons such as they use to carry meteorological instruments, and with one or two of these, and a cylinder of compressed hydrogen gas (which you should be able to get for about $5 or $6) you will be equipped with an excellent carrier for your camera. Of course, you will have to arrange to trip your shutter with an electromagnet, operated from the ground, and you may have to use a small winch to haul the balloon down, but these are details you will have to work out for yourself.

As for focusing, the only thing you can do is to stop the lens down to about F/16 or F/22 and set it at the hyperfocal distance—that is, the distance beyond which everything is sharp. Not knowing what your lens is, I cannot tell you this distance, but the manufacturer can, if you will write to him and give him the specifications of the lens—focal length, speed, type, and serial number.

By all means develop your exposures as soon as you make them, but do not use film pack; cut films are far better.

I do not see that you would gain anything by using magnesium flares rather than sunlight. Try to take your pictures at such an angle and such a time of day that the light falls on the subject at an angle of 45°; if you can manage to do this you will get the best possible relief, which, I take it, is what you want.

I am inclined to think that your best type of film would be a medium-speed, orthochromatic, fairly high contrast film, used with a compensating filter. But you might do better with a contrast filter of some sort—I can't tell without knowing more about the problem. Write to the Eastman Kodak Company, Rochester, New York, Service Department, and state your problem *as fully as possible*, giving all possible details, and ask them what film and filter they would recommend. Also, ask for their booklet on Tropical Development (sent free). And have the films factory-packed, in sealed tin boxes.

WHEN a ship salutes a ship.

Request:—Is an enlisted man, wearing a Congressional Medal of Honor, and wishing to go ashore, entitled to use the Captain's Gig? Does he rate the starboard gangway coming and going?

What is the proper procedure for a merchant vessel on dipping the colors? As for example, in San Diego-San Pedro harbors, does the merchant vessel, underway, dip to a Naval vessel, anchored, and to every Naval vessel she passes. Or does she wait and dip to the flagship of that flotilla? And how can one tell, if that is the case, which is the flagship?

—G. F. Freeman, "S.S. Knoxville City", Isthmian S.S. Company, Baltimore, Md.

Reply by Major F. W. Hopkins:—An enlisted man wearing a Congressional Medal of Honor does not use the Captain's Gig, nor starboard gangway. He does just as any enlisted man without a medal does. Upon the day the medal is presented, or under some ceremony in which he is being honored, he may be given special honors. But there are no regulations which accord special honors to the holder of a Medal of Honor—other than the natural respect any superior or junior would hold towards such a decoration. The holder does receive an additional pay of $2.00 per month.

As to salutes between merchant ships and Naval Vessels:

> NAVAL REGULATIONS, "Art 302: (1) No ship of the Navy shall lower her sails or dip her ensign unless in return for such compliments.
>
> "Art 341: When any vessel salutes a ship of the Navy by dipping her national ensign, it shall be returned dip for dip. If before 8 A.M. or after sunset the colors shall be hoisted, the dip returned, and after a suitable period, the colors hauled down."

Those are the only references to dipping in Naval Regulations, and are only there to enjoin courtesy. Naval vessels do not normally dip their colors. Dipping to a man of war is entirely up to the personal procedure of the captain of the merchantman and his notions of propriety, and is not necessary.

A man of war salutes by displaying the ensign, and firing the number of guns prescribed in a table according to rank, etc. Also under certain conditions the salute also includes manning the rails, or turning out the guard and band, etc.

After studying over the tables, rules, etc., regarding salutes between ships, salutes to

seniors, to foreign men of war, entering foreign ports, etc., I would suggest that *if* a merchantman wants to dip colors, the following would be the best rule:

On the high seas, meeting a man of war—when coming close aboard, after 8 A.M. and before sunset, dip once. "Close aboard" means about six hundred yards.

On the high seas, meeting a squadron or force, or more than one naval ship—dip to the flagship or the ship carrying the senior officer present.

A flagship flies a square blue flag with two, three, or four white stars upon it, at the main mast, in place of the little streamer "commission pennant." *If* you see a ship flying a Red flag with stars, that means there is an admiral aboard it but that another ship present carries his senior—look around for a ship flying a blue one—that will be the flagship of the group. An officer below flag rank (Admiral) in command of a force, flies a burgee (two pointed flag) at the main mast, instead of square. It will have one star on it. If there are several ships together but not of the same command, and none of them are flagships, the ship bearing the senior officer will be flying a blue three-cornered flag from the starboard, after, yardarm.

On entering a United States harbor where men of war are lying at anchor, I think it would be all right to dip colors as you come close aboard the flagship, or the man of war nearest to your course. DON'T dip to them all. As a matter of fact I fancy that they would be happier if you didn't dip at all, because some poor gob may not be watching as close as he might, and fail to note your dip, and so get called down from the bridge because no return was made. Anyway, try to dip to flagships—they are always watching more closely. But remember, you don't have to dip at all.

All about honors, salutes, flags and signals is contained in "The Boat Book of the U. S. Navy" obtainable from the Government Printing Office, Washington, D. C., I think for about 30¢.

THE fisherman's lariat.

Request:—I'd be pleased to receive any information which you may have on surf casting.

I have been fishing in salt water for a number of years and I believe this sport is the best of salt water fishing. I consider the reel and then the rod the most important factors. I have a ten foot Calcutta one piece rod and a common reel, two hundred fifty yards.

Now it seems to me that I should be able to cast three hundred feet, with this outfit. I now get one hundred seventy-five at best, therefore information on a good reel and rod is my first desire.

—William H. Creely, Camden, N. J.

Reply by Mr. C. Blackburn Miller:—To become a successful surf-caster, it is necessary to acquire the best implements. A Calcutta pole, ten feet in length is perfectly serviceable but it is not comparable with rods built for that kind of work.

There are numerous well built, factory made, rods, such as, for instance, Kingfisher's. But the best, in my estimation, are made by Malby of Plainfield, N. J., costing from $15.00 to $45.00. These tips are from six and a half to seven feet in length, weighing about fourteen ounces. Their action in casting is unsurpassed. Cramer of Long Branch, N. J., also builds a very fine surf rod. It is advisable to visit one of these rod makers and select a rod the action of which appeals to you.

There are many reels on the market, but I am of the opinion that a star-drag on a surf reel is utterly unnecessary. The fewer gadgets on a reel of this kind the better. The reel that I would recommend is Cozzone "The Squidder" which is of simple construction and holds 300 yards of No. 9 thread line. Pfleuger also turns out a good reel without stardrag which I have used with comfort and success.

After you have obtained an outfit that satisfies you, it becomes merely a question of time and practice before you are reaching out beyond the bar where the big ones are.

YOU can't fool all of the ducks all of the time.

Request:—My shooting partner and I don't agree on the best way to set out decoys for blue bill ducks. We have been unable to find anything on this subject in the Public Library and will greatly appreciate getting your opinion.

We shoot on a point on the east shore. With a north wind, please advise the best place to set out twenty-four decoys, giving maximum and minimum distance from shore, and how best to group and space them.

—J. M. Daggett, Waukesha, Wis.

Reply by Mr. John B. "Ozark Ripley" Thompson:—There is no certain method of setting out decoys for blue bills, nor can anyone determine for a place away from his own shooting grounds the best distance from shore. I shoot them a lot on a large lake in Northern Quebec. There they decoy best by setting the decoys in the shoals about a mile from shore. The changing of the wind may have something to do with your flight birds.

In a lake in the South where I shoot, we have greatest success by scattering the decoys at least a yard apart and without any attempt at any formation. There is an oldtimer who has shot for years nearby who has his ducks wired together so every six are in a V shape, but he does not get as many as we do to my way of thinking, and he is just as good a shot.

When I know the lead or pass I like decoys as far out as possible, as ducks are always on the alert when passing shore, particularly if there is any cover along it. One place I work close to shore, scattering the decoys around at random and also leaving a few right on the shore close to the water as if they were sunning or dozing. My shore sets bring mostly singles and pairs that have been broken off from flocks.

It is mighty difficult to advise a person about a lake or river where I have never been and have never experienced the vagaries of the flight birds or those just coming in or going to feeding grounds. I do not like to see decoys set too much like any formation. Ducks suspect a human agency back of it when things are set too carefully. A whole lot in decoying depends upon what the ducks have had to escape before coming to your parts. A good blind and to act right in a blind means a whole lot, as much as setting out decoys.

A JU-JU for remembrance.

Request:—Noticed your name as a reference for things African so here goes.

By way of introduction: I served in the British tanks in the Great War, following a jaunt in the Princess Patricias Canadian Light Infantry; later a captain, inf. res., U. S. A.

One of my tanks I named "Ju-Ju" and had a white skull painted on the beak of the bus; requirement that names begin with "J", that being the battalion designation until we received the numeral "10" in place of that. Did good work with the "Ju-Ju" in the Amiens show.

The thought struck me that in remembrance of the old bus I would like a real African "Ju-Ju" wooden idol. Not too large, this for a desk piece, say six inches or so. Can you kindly direct me to where I can fulfill this wish?

—James A. McGuire, Tucson, Ariz.

Reply by Mr. Gordon MacCreagh:—A juju you want? Why not perhaps an okapi? Or wouldn't a pygmy hippopotamus do? What I mean, something easy.

A "genu-wine" juju is, of course, right out of the question. To get such would mean a tribal war; or at least a slave raid.

Like a genuine Alaskan totem pole, those things are not for sale. But a carved idol, looking sort of juju-esque, is possible. Genuine native handicraft, of course; but cannily made for the tourist sucker. None the less a swell ornament; and then you'll have to invent a suitable story to go with it.

Write to: Messrs. Shaw & Hunter, Safari Outfitters, 6th Ave., Nairobi, Kenya, Africa.

Or, perhaps, better to: The Uganda Co., Kampala, Uganda, Africa.

Or both.

On the spot, you can pick up magnificently hideous statuettes for a few dollars. How much you have to pay to a trade store from this distance will depend upon how well you can haggle.

A CAMBRIDGE archer wants a heavy hunting bow.

Request:—I am interested in making a hunting bow of a drawing weight of approximately eighty pounds. But, as yet, I have not been able to get a design which will stand up. Would you kindly send me any information you may have acquired on the semi-flat type? I have tried the English type but have had no success as yet. I have attained a drawing weight of sixty pounds but broke it in overdrawing.

—William Carr, Cambridge, Mass.

Reply by Mr. Earl B. Powell:—In your case, all I see for you to do is to make your bows a bit thicker and take your time in making them.

If you are making semi-flat bows, I would advise you to make them five feet eight in between nocks and about two inches wide if flat, and an inch and a half if semi-flat which is about twice as wide as thick.

For an English type bow make it six feet two inches long, and with a low arch if you are using thirty inch arrows.

If you will look up Paul Crouch, ex-National Champion, or Louis C. Smith, for years Secretary of the N.A.A. (both in Boston or suburbs) you will also be able to get a lot of information.

There is a live club there and also the American Archery Association is located there.

Write to the American Bowman-Review, Albany, Oregon, and they can give you the addresses of all clubs near you.

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Send each question *direct* to the expert in charge of the section whose field covers it. He will reply by mail. **Do Not** send questions to the magazine. Be definite; explain your case sufficiently to guide the expert you question. The magazine does not assume any responsibility. **No Reply** will be made to requests for partners, for financial backing or for employment.

★*(Enclose addressed envelope with International Reply Coupon.)*

ASK ADVENTURE EXPERTS

SPORTS AND HOBBIES

Archery—EARL B. POWELL, care of *Adventure.*

Baseball—FREDERICK LIEB, care of *Adventure.*

Basketball—STANLEY CARHART, 99 Bread St., Matawan, N. J.

Camping—PAUL M. FINK, Jonesboro, Tenn.

Boxing—CAPT. JEAN V. GROMBACH, 113 W. 57th St., N. Y. C.

Canoeing: *paddling, sailing, cruising, regattas*—EDGAR S. PERKINS, 30A W. Cook Av., Libertyville, Ill.

Coins: *and Medals*—WILLIAM L. CLARK, American Numismatic Society, Broadway at 156th St., N. Y. C.

Dogs—JOHN B. THOMPSON, care of *Adventure.*

Fencing—CAPT. JEAN V. GROMBACH, 113 W. 57th St., N. Y. C.

First Aid—DR. CLAUDE P. FORDYCE, care of *Adventure.*

Fishing: *fresh water; fly and bait casting; bait; camping outfits; fishing trips*—JOHN B. THOMPSON, (Ozark Ripley), care of *Adventure.*

Fishing: *salt water, bottom fishing, surf casting; trolling; equipment and locations*—C. BLACKBURN MILLER, care of *Adventure.*

Football—JOHN B. FOSTER, care of *Adventure.*

Globe-trotting and vagabonding—ROBERT SPIERS-BENJAMIN, care of *Adventure.*

Health Building Activities, Hiking—DR. CLAUDE P. FORDYCE, care of *Adventure.*

Horses: *care, training of horses in general; jumping; and polo, the cavalry arm*—MAJOR R. ERNEST DUPUY, care of *Adventure.*

Motor Boating—GERALD T. WHITE, Montville, N. J.

Motor Camping and Trailer Camping—MAJOR CHAS. G. PERCIVAL, M.D., 152 W. 65th St., N. Y. C.

Motorcycling—*regulations, mechanics, racing*—CHARLES M. DODGE, 161 Ferguson Av., Burlington, Vt.

Mountain Climbing—THEODORE S. SOLOMONS, 1632 So. Hayworth Av., Los Angeles, Calif.

Old Songs—ROBERT WHITE, 913 W. 7th St., Los Angeles, Calif.

Old-Time Sailoring—CHAS. H. HALL, 446 Ocean Ave., Brooklyn, N. Y.

Rifles, Pistols, Revolvers: *foreign and American*—DONEGAN WIGGINS, R. F. D. No. 3, Box 69, Salem, Oregon.

Shotguns: *foreign and American makes; wing shooting*—JOHN B. THOMPSON, care of *Adventure.*

★**Skiing and Snowshoeing**—W. H. PRICE, 3436 Mance St., Montreal, Quebec.

Small Boating: *skiffs, outboard, small launch, river and lake cruising*—RAYMOND S. SPEARS, Inglewood, Calif.

Stamps—DR. H. A. DAVIS, The American Philatelic Society, 3421 Colfax Av., Denver, Colo.

Swimming—LOUIS DEB. HANDLEY, 115 West 11th St., N. Y. C.

Swords: *spears, pole arms and armor*—CAPT. R. E. GARDNER, 980 Northwest Blvd., Columbus, Ohio.

Tournament Fly and Bait Casting—CHIEF STANWOOD, East Sullivan, Maine.

Track—JACKSON SCHOLZ, R. D. No. 1, Doylestown, Pa.

Woodcraft—PAUL M. FINK, Jonesboro, Tenn.

Wrestling—CHARLES B. CRANFORD, County Office Bldg., Recreation Comm., White Plains, N. Y.

Yachting—A. R. KNAUER, 2722 E. 75th Pl., Chicago, Ill.

SCIENTIFIC AND TECHNICAL SUBJECTS

Anthropology: *American; north of the Panama Canal, customs, dress, architecture; pottery and decorative arts, weapons and implements, fetishism, social divisions*—ARTHUR WOODWARD, Los Angeles Museum Exposition Park, Los Angeles, Calif.

Automobiles and Aircraft Engines: *design, operation and maintenance*—EDMUND B. NEIL, care of *Adventure.*

Aviation: *airplanes, airships, airways and landing fields, contests, aero clubs, insurance, laws, licenses, operating data, schools, foreign activities, publications, parachutes, gliders*—MAJOR FALK HARMEL, 709 Longfellow St., Washington, D. C.

Big Game Hunting: *guides and equipment*—ERNEST W. SHAW, South Carver, Mass.

Entomology: *insects and spiders; venomous and disease-carrying insects*—DR. S. W. FROST, 465 E. Foster Ave., State College, Pa.

Forestry: *in the United States, national forests of the Rocky Mountain States*—ERNEST W. SHAW, South Carver, Mass.

Tropical Forestry: *tropical forests and products*—WM. R. BARBOUR, 1091 Springdale Rd., Atlanta, Ga.

Herpetology: *reptiles and amphibians*—CLIFFORD H. POPE, care of *Adventure.*

Marine Architecture: *ship modeling*—CHAS. H. HALL, 446 Ocean Av., Brooklyn, N. Y.

Mining and Prospecting: *anywhere in No. America... Outfitting; any mineral, metallic or non-metallic*—VICTOR SHAW, 11628 Mayfield Av., West Los Angeles, Calif.

The Merchant Marine. GORDON MACALLISTER, care of *Adventure.*

Motor Vehicles: *operation, legislative restrictions and traffic*—EDMUND B. NEIL, care of *Adventure.*

Ornithology: *birds; their habits and distribution*—DAVIS QUINN, 3508 Kings College Pl., Bronx, N. Y.

Photography: *outfitting, work in out-of-the-way places; general information*—PAUL L. ANDERSON, 36 Washington St., East Orange, N. J.

Precious and semi-precious stones: *cutting and polishing of gem materials; technical information*—F. J. ESTERLIN, 901-902 Shreve Bldg., 210 Post Road, San Francisco, Calif.

Radio: *telegraphy, telephony, history, receiver construction, portable sets*—DONALD MCNICOL, 132 Union Road, Roselle Park, N. J.

Railroads: *in the United States, Mexico and Canada*—R. T. NEWMAN, 701 N. Main St., Paris, Ill.

Sawmilling—HAPSBURG LIEBE, care of *Adventure.*

Taxidermy—EDWARD B. LANG, 156 JoraLemon Street, Belleville, N. J.

Wildcrafting and Trapping—RAYMOND S. SPEARS, Inglewood, Calif.

MILITARY, NAVAL AND POLICE SUBJECTS

Army Matters: *United States and Foreign*—MAJOR GLEN R. TOWNSEND, 708 Angenette Ave., Kirkwood, Missouri.

Federal Investigation Activities: *Secret Service, etc.*—FRANCIS H. BENT, 251 Third St., Fair Haven, N. J.

Royal Canadian Mounted Police—ALEC. CAVADAS, 1296 East Hastings, Vancouver, B. C.

State Police—FRANCIS H. BENT, 251 Third St., Fair Haven, N. J.

U. S. Marine Corps—MAJOR F. W. HOPKINS, care of *Adventure.*

GEOGRAPHICAL SUBJECTS

Philippine Islands—BUCK CONNER, Quartzsite, Ariz., care Conner Field.

★New Guinea—L. P. B. ARMIT, care of *Adventure.*

★New Zealand: Cook Island, Samoa—TOM L. MILLS, 27 Bowen St., Feilding, New Zealand.

★Australia and Tasmania—ALAN FOLEY, 18a Sandridge St., Bondi, Sydney, Australia.

★South Sea Islands—WILLIAM MCCREADIE, "Yatina," 3 Lucknow St., Willoughby, N. S. W.

Hawaii—JOHN SNELL, Hawaii Equal Rights Comm., Honolulu, Hawaii.

Asia, Part 1 ★*Siam, Malay States, Straits Settlements, Java, Sumatra, Dutch East Indies, Ceylon.*—V. B. WINDLE, care of *Adventure.* **2** *French Indo-China, Hong Kong, Macao, Tibet, Southern, Eastern and Central China.*—SEWARD S. CRAMER, care of *Adventure.* **3** *Northern China and Mongolia.*—PAUL H. FRANSON, Bldg. No. 3 Veterans Administration Facility, Minneapolis, Minn. **4** *Persia, Arabia.*—CAPTAIN BEVERLY-GIDDINGS, care of *Adventure.* **5** ★*Palestine.*—CAPTAIN H. W. EADES, 3808 West 26th Ave., Vancouver, B. C.

Africa, Part 1 ★*Egypt, Tunis, Algeria, Anglo-Egyptian Sudan.*—CAPT. H. W. EADES, 3808 West 26th Ave., Vancouver, B. C. **2** *Abyssinia, Italian Somaliland, British Somali Coast Protectorate, Eritrea, Uganda, Tanganyika, Kenya.*—GORDON MAC CREAGH, 3482-16th Av., So., St. Petersburg, Florida. **3** *Tripoli, Sahara caravans.*—CAPT. BEVERLY-GIDDINGS, care of *Adventure.* **4** *Morocco.*—GEORGE E. HOLT, care of *Adventure.* **5** *Sierra Leone to Old Calabar, West Africa, Nigeria.*—N. E. NELSON, 1641 Greenlawn Ave., Akron, Ohio. **6** *Cape Colony, Orange River Colony, Natal Zululand, Transvaal, and Rhodesia.*—CAPT. F. J. FRANKLIN, Adventure Comp, Simi, Calif. **7** ★*Portuguese East.*—R. G. WARING, Corunna, Ont., Canada. **8** ★*Bechuanaland, Southwest Africa, Angola, Belgian Congo, Egyptian Sudan and French West Africa.*—MAJOR S. L. GLENISTER, care of *Adventure.*

Madagascar—RALPH LINTON, care of *Adventure.*

Europe, Part 1 *Denmark, Germany.*—G. I. COLBURN, care of *Adventure.*

★Central America—ROBERT S. BENJAMIN, care of *Adventure.*

South America, Part 1 *Colombia, Ecuador, Peru, Bolivia, and Chile.*—EDGAR YOUNG, care of *Adventure.* **2** *Venezuela, The Guianas, Uruguay, Paraguay, Argentina, and Brazil.*—DR. PAUL VANORDEN SHAW, care of *Adventure.*

★West Indies—JOHN B. LEFFINGWELL, Box 1333, Nueva Gerona, Isle of Pines, Cuba.

Mexico, Part 1 *Northern Border States.*—J. W. WHITEAKER, 2903 San Gabriel St., Austin, Tex. **2** *Quintana Roo, Yucatan, Campeche.*—W. RUSSELL SHEETS, 301 Poplar Ave., Takoma Prk., Md.

Baffinland and Greenland—VICTOR SHAW, 11628 Mayfield Av., West Los Angeles, Calif.

Iceland—G. I. COLBRON, care of *Adventure.*

Canada, Part 1 ★*Southeastern Quebec.*—WILLIAM MACMILLAN, 24 Plessis St., Quebec, Canada. **2** ★*Height of Land Region, Northern Ontario and Northern Quebec, Southeastern Ungava and Keewatin.*—S. E. SANGSTER, care *Adventure.* **3** ★*Ottawa Valley and Southeastern Ontario.*—HARRY M. MOORE, *The Courier Advocate,* Trenton, Ont., Canada. **4** ★*Georgian Bay and Southern Ontario, National Parks, Camping.*—A. D. L. ROBINSON, 1163 Victoria Rd., Walkerville, Ont., Canada. **5** *Lake of Woods Region.*—R. F. LINCOLN, care of *The Minneapolis Tribune,* Minneapolis, Minn. **6** *Yukon, British Columbia and Alberta.*—C. PLOWDEN, Plowden Bay, Howe Sound, B. C. **7** *Northern Saskatchewan, Indian life and language, hunting, trapping*—H. S. M. KEMP, 313 9th St., E., Prince Albert, Sask.

Alaska—THEODORE S. SOLOMONS, 1632 So. Hayworth Av., Los Angeles, Calif.

Western U. S., Part 1 *Pacific Coast States*—FRANK WINCH, care of *Adventure.* **3** *New Mexico (Indians, etc.)*—H. F. ROBINSON, 1211 W. Roma Ave., Albuquerque, N. M. **4** *Wyoming and Colorado, Homesteading, etc.*—E. P. WELLS, Box 203, Prineville, Oregon. **5** *Nevada, Montana and Northern Rockies*—FRED W. EGELSTON, Elks' Home, Elko, Nev. **6** *Idaho and environs.*—R. T. NEWMAN, 701 N. Main St., Paris, Ill. **7** *Texas, Oklahoma.*—J. W. WHITEAKER, 2903 San Gabriel St., Austin, Tex.

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29x4.75-20	2.50	1.35
29x5.00-19	2.65	1.25
30x5.00-20	2.85	1.35
5.25-17	2.90	1.35
28x5.25-18	2.90	1.35
29x5.25-19	2.95	1.35
30x5.25-20	2.95	1.35
31x5.25-21	3.25	1.35
5.50-17	3.35	1.40
28x5.50-18	3.35	1.40
29x5.50-19	3.35	1.45
6.00-17	3.40	1.40
29x6.00-18	3.40	1.40
31x6.00-19	3.40	1.45
32x6.00-20	3.45	1.55
33x6.00-21	3.65	1.55
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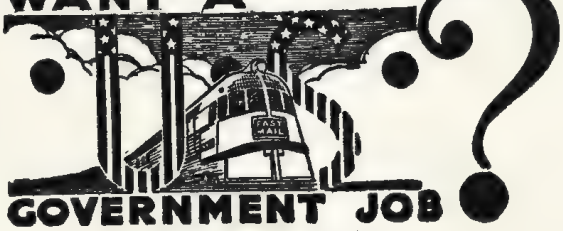

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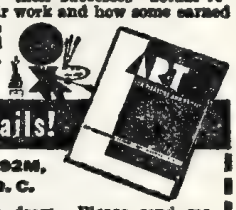

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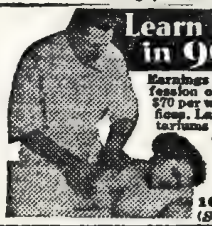

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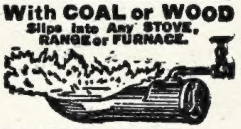

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And William E. Barrett contributes a breath-taking novelette of the squared circle, "Stand Up and Fight," of a champion with his fists—and a murder mystery that faces him the minute he leaves the arena.

Hugh Fullerton gives us a vivid humor-filled yarn of the tight-lipped, hard-shooting revenue-haters of the Kentucky hills, in "God and Lemuel Sizemore." And Erle Stanley Gardner, in "Luck Charm," shows that the ways of the Orient may be subtle and devious—but when you fool with a yellow man's pet joss, you're monkeying with dynamite!

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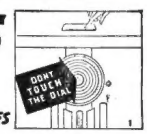

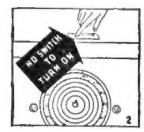

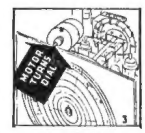

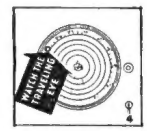

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